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11-30-'29

"Flowers for your opening night, Lora." His voice was bashful

Tag-Along Girl

Eighteen years of last minute invitations, of being "just the little Stanley girl" from across the tracks, made Lora long to be somebody just for once. And her dream came true

By Helen Ahern

LIKE a slim, restless sprite, Lora Stanley fluttered about the shabby living room. She straightened a table cover, fluffed up a sofa pillow, and moved an ash tray. Her gaze wandered to the clock. It was a quarter to four. Still fifteen minutes must elapse before Cam arrived. Cam—Cameron Wells — Lora whispered the name to herself rapturously.

She raised a window shade, but lowered it hastily as a flood of afternoon sunshine picked out with unerring fidelity a worn place on the rug and the frayed upholstery of the davenport. Lora sighed and then shrugged. It was impossible to be unhappy for long when the "most wonderful man in the world" was coming to take you for a ride. She looked again at the clock. Twelve minutes more.

The battered phonograph in the corner caught her eye. Music would help pass the dragging minutes.

"To be in love."

The machine wheezed out a popular tune.

"To be in love
Is sim-plee won-derful,
To be in love—
Eh-spesh-ully—with you."

Unconsciously Lora's feet tapped out dance steps. She danced as naturally as she breathed, and for a brief moment she forgot the time, the place—even Cam, who had strode into her life the night before like a blond young god.

"At it again!"

A complaining voice broke the spell of the dance. Her mother, a small, sharp-faced woman with the remnants of beauty, was frowning at her from the doorway.

"I declare, Lora," she said, "every time I look at you you're cavorting around. Your brains must be all in your feet."

Lora paused halfway in a pirouette and shut off the phonograph. "I'm just killing time," she explained. "I'm waiting for Cameron Wells. We have a date."

This should mollify mother, whose greatest hope was popularity, admirers, and eventually a prosperous husband for Lora.

"Cameron Wells! Not old J. D.'s son?" Mrs. Stanley was surprised.

A faintly bitter smile crossed Lora's face as she nodded. Her mother's surprise was unflattering but well-founded. Lora herself had been just as surprised when the much-heralded Cameron Wells had asked her for a date at their first meeting.

She was not in the habit of making such sudden and dazzling conquests. As Lora put it herself, "I'm one of those girls who are always on the outside looking in."

More than once she had studied her mirror to find the reason for her lack of social success, but could see only a little elfin face, which had regular enough features, hair like a dusky cloud, wide, pansy-blue eyes, and a soft red mouth that curved a trifle wistfully.

LORA thought sometimes that if she had lived in a big house at the right end of town, instead of in the shabby old Stanley place across the tracks, things might have been different. In Glen City, the little Minnesota town where she had been born, the location of your home, the size of your bank account, and the year and the number of cylinders of your car meant a great deal. Because she was a Stanley, one of the town's oldest families, Lora was not entirely excluded from Glen City society, but she felt herself a hanger-on.

She was invited only to the larger parties that included every one, or to the smaller, more exclusive ones at the last minute to fill in. At her mother's urging Lora accepted these grudgingly given invitations, but she went with the knowledge that her clothes were

homemade, and that she was the poorest girl in the crowd. Self-consciousness and a sense of inferiority destroyed what chance she might have had at popularity.

The local boys found her quiet and lacking in the assurance and vivacity that make a good companion. Even her dancing, which was Lora's one talent, they considered a little odd. Like many girls who have concentrated on solo dancing, she found it hard to follow the uninspired ploddings of the average small town ballroom partner.

For these reasons it was astonishing that Cameron Wells should have singled her out for a date on their first meeting. He was the son of the town's big lumberman, and his return home after his graduation from college was the cause of much excited planning among the Glen City girls. Cam was known to be not only wealthy, but good-looking, and with considerable reputation as a heart-breaker.

Madge Halstead, who divided honors with Marcia Parsons as leader of the Glen City younger set, gave a dinner the evening of his arrival in town. It was a small, very select affair. Naturally Lora was not invited — at least not originally.

Just an hour before the dinner Madge had telephoned. "Be an angel, Lora, and help me out. I'm short a girl at my dinner to-night. That darned Marcia Parsons just wired that she won't be back from Minneapolis until to-morrow."

"I'm afraid I can't—" Lora was about to refuse when her mother interrupted.

"Madge Halstead, isn't it?" Mrs. Stanley had answered the telephone. "Lora, you must go. You mustn't turn down anything of hers!"

"But I don't want to go on a last minute invitation." Lora put her hand over the mouthpiece while she argued with her mother.

"It's the only kind of invitations you get," said Mrs. Stanley. "You certainly are going. I'll press your pink dress for you," forestalling any further excuse.

"All right, I'll come." Lora spoke into the telephone again. Madge's party would be preferable to an evening of mother's scolding and complaints.

"I hate these parties. I never have any fun." She hung up the receiver rebelliously.

"It's because you go around with your head in the clouds," said Mrs. Stanley. "You're always thinking of your silly dancing and the stage."

She was referring to Lora's often expressed desire to leave Glen City and study for the stage. She loved her dancing and it offered escape from the humiliations of the life about her, but Mrs. Stanley had thrown up her hands in horror at such a suggestion.

"The thing for you to do, young lady, is to find a good man and marry him. That's the proper life for a girl."

MRS. STANLEY had been a belle in her own day, and she had no understanding or sympathy for her daughter's social failure. She considered it Lora's fault that the telephone was not constantly ringing, and the front porch besieged with eager admirers. Most of her sharpness came from disappointment. A great romance lover, she had hoped to relive some of her own gala youth in Lora's beaux, love letters, and heart-throbbings. She would look at her daughter in a sad, puzzled fashion when, night after night, the two of them would sit alone.

She was almost tearful with delight when Lora announced a date with Cameron Wells.

"I knew his father well." Her expression became tenderly reminiscent. "He was a gay young dog in his day, couldn't resist a pretty face, but every girl in town was mad about him. Is your man anything like that?"

"Yes, he's very attractive."

"But how did it happen—your date, I mean?" Mrs. Stanley was anxious for details.

"I don't know," was Lora's honest answer.

She had gone to Madge's dinner in the made-over but well-pressed pink dress, and found herself assigned to Cam as a table partner. The place had been intended for Marcia Parsons, the town beauty. Madge must have forgotten to change the place cards, thought Lora, or she would never have seated an important guest like Cameron Wells next to a nobody like "the little Stanley girl."

Lora had been first frightened and then thrilled to find herself beside Cam. He was very attentive, very charming, in his bold, confident fashion.

"You're going to give me a lot of time, you know," he said before they had known each other ten minutes.

"But—" Lora was not used to such headlong tactics.

"Now, don't tell me about some other boy friends." He mistook her stammering confusion.

He didn't know that she was an unpopular nobody! He thought her one of the town's belles. Lora rejoiced, because never before had she met a man as attractive as this tall, fair boy with his laughing blue eyes, his flashing, white-toothed smile, and smooth, sunny hair.

"How about taking a little ride with me to-morrow?" he had asked on parting. "I want you to see the 'Yellow Devil'—that's my bus. And it's a hot number!"

Lora's heart almost stopped beating as she faltered, "I'd love it."

"At four, then," gayly, and he was gone, leaving Lora with happy dreams.

For the first time in her nineteen years she was in love. It must be love, she decided, that filled her with these queer, excited tremors.

"WELL, I must say I'm tickled." Her mother broke into Lora's ecstatic thoughts. "That's splendid — Cameron Wells!" Mrs. Stanley beamed approval. "Why, he's the most eligible young man in town. Is he much interested?"

"He asked me for a date, that's all."

"It needn't be all if you're clever. But you want to forget this dancing nonsense. No man likes a stage struck girl."

Lora listened to her mother with unaccustomed attention. With the memory of Cam's handsome, smiling face before her, she was inclined to agree that there were more desirable things in life than a career and fame. If she could only hold and increase his interest!

The doorbell rang. It was exactly four.

Lora breathed a little prayer as she answered it on flying feet.

"'Lo, beautiful!"

Cam was on the threshold. He was even more handsome than she had remembered him. His flattering "beautiful" sent a little thrill of ecstasy through Lora. She was too inexperienced to suspect it to be "line." He was the first man who had ever called her by such a delightful nickname.

"'Lo, Mr. Blarney Man." She found courage to chaff back.

"It's not blarney. It's the honest-to-gosh truth."

Lora laughed. She was truly beautiful when she did.

In a very gay mood, she settled down into Cam's bright-colored roadster, the Yellow Devil. His boldly expressed admiration stimulated her and loosened her tongue. She forgot shyness and chattered with ease as they sped away from Glen City along a tree-shaded highway.

"He likes me! He thinks I'm beautiful!" She whispered to herself and pinched her arm to make sure that she was awake.

"We'll drive out a ways and find a place to eat dinner," Cam said. "How does that sound to you, beautiful? There's a nice inn about—what the—"

He broke off abruptly and stopped the car with a great screaming of brakes, just in time to prevent a collision with a small coupé that had been hidden by a curve in the road.

LORA had a premonition of disaster as she read the initials, "M. P.," on the door of the coupé, and recognized the car as Marcia Parsons's.

"What's the idea, parking in a place like this?" asked Cam angrily of the invisible driver.

A girl appeared from behind the coupé. "Oh, hello, Lora," she said languidly. Her very black-eyed gaze traveled on and swept Cam from head to toe. "Your boy friend seems a bit upset."

"I'm sorry." Cam was flustered a little under Marcia's mocking stare.

"Miss Parsons—Mr. Wells." Lora presented the two reluctantly, conscious that Cam was admiring the other girl's vivid loveliness.

Marcia had never been more beautiful. Her smart white tennis dress contrasted with the golden sun-tan of her skin, and revealed an alluring expanse of well-rounded back and arms. The carelessly knotted scarlet scarf on her shoulder was a perfect setting for her black eyes and sleek dark hair.

In a split second Lora felt colorless and drab.

Her heart sank.

"So you're Cam Wells." Marcia's tone managed to be flattering. "I thought I was going to like you from what I heard about you. I never thought you'd be the kind of man who bawls out poor little girls whose engines stall on them." She pouted prettily.

"Oh, come now, Miss Parsons, don't be like that." Cam smiled his best smile in answer to her challenge. "You know we're going to be great friends." He vaulted over the side of his roadster and joined her eagerly. "Let me see what I can do with that engine."

Lora was forgotten.

She watched his fair head bend close to Marcia's dark one as they peered into the hood of the coupé.

"It looks hopeless," Cam said after an intensive survey. "Guess it's a job for a mechanic. Tell you what—I'll drive you into town and we can send out a garage man."

"But you were going somewhere—you and Lora." Marcia's tone was almost too sweet, as she turned to Cam's companion. "I'd hate to spoil a party for you, Lora," she said. "You get out so seldom, poor dear."

Lora was too angry and hurt to think of a come-back. Cam was looking at her in a surprised, slightly critical fashion.

"It's all right with you, Lora, isn't

it," he said, "if we drive Miss Parsons back to town?"

"Of course," she answered, but her heart felt like a great sodden lump within her.

Her brief moment of triumph was over. All her old self-consciousness, her tongue-tied silence returned. She made no effort to break into the conversation carried on by Marcia and Cam.

"I guess I'd better drop you first, Lora," he said as they reached the outskirts of town. "It may take some time around the garage, and I don't want to make you late for dinner."

He had apparently forgotten his own invitation to dinner. Lora was not surprised. Marcia had made it plain to him what an unpopular nobody his companion really was. She could not compete with the town beauty either in looks or clothes, so it was no wonder he wanted to be rid of her as quickly as possible.

"YOU'RE back early."

Her mother's curious comment was like salt in a sore wound. Lora could only nod without answering.

"Did he ask you for another engagement?"

"No, I'll never see him again."

Before her mother could question further, Lora ran up the stairs and flung herself on her bed, where she sobbed out her heartbreak.

Her prophecy that she would never see Cam again seemed only too true as the next three weeks passed. She saw him, of course, on the street, whisking by in the Yellow Devil, at church on Sunday, once at a big bridge party. But those glimpses were not what Lora meant by "seeing him." He had made no further effort to seek her company after that first disastrous date, although he was polite and cordial enough when they met casually.

It was town gossip that he was giving Marcia Parsons a big rush.

Lora was half sick with jealousy and self-disgust. Tortured fancy pictured Marcia cuddled beside him in the yellow roadster, smart and immaculate in gay sports clothes; Marcia, in filmy chiffons, her blue black head against his shoulder as they moved to soft dance music; or Marcia on her own moon-lit porch with Cam leaning over her, his blue eyes looking into her black ones.

Lora tried to tear herself from such imaginings.

"It isn't fair," she cried to herself. Marcia had everything—lovers by the score, money, pretty clothes! Why must she have Cam? To her he was just another man. To Lora he was love, romance, the realization of dreams.

Lora blamed the world, Marcia, and yet herself most of all for her failure to hold him. "Dumb-bell, flat tire, sad bird, wet smack," and all the cruel names that she could think of, she applied to herself.

"You're just no good," she told a mirrored Lora. "You meet the one man in the world and lose him the next day."

Mrs. Stanley noticed her daughter's wanness and suggested a tonic. "You ought to get outdoors more, too," she added. "It's too bad young Wells doesn't come around again to take you riding."

Lora groaned to herself. "I'm all right. It's just the heat."

"You don't even dance these days," her mother went on. "I don't hold with theater dancing, but a little is good exercise."

"I don't want to do anything. I wish I were dead!"

SHE was in this frame of mind when Marcia Parsons called up with an invitation to a dance out at the Glen City country club.

"I'm having everybody in town," Marcia said.

That's why she's asking me, was Lora's bitter thought.

"I want to make it a bang-up party," Marcia continued. "I've found a new man, Chuck Palmer. He's sort of a cousin of mine by marriage, and he's in town with a dancing act at the Palace. I'm all of a do-flop. He had an act once on Broadway, and he's hot stuff, a lot different from the silly town boys. You'll come, won't you, to the dance? With so many girls out of town for the summer, I'll be frightfully short on females."

Lora had no desire to meet Chuck Palmer. She didn't want to go to the party, but refusal balked on her lips. After all, Cam might be there.

"I'd be delighted—thank you," she heard herself saying.

"Then it's all set. I'll ask Tommie and Ruth to pick you up. A lot of men will come stag, so you'll have plenty of partners once you get to the club."

Tommie and Ruth Carter were a married couple who had taken the place of an escort for Lora at more than one party. She was tempted to withdraw her acceptance. It was infinitely humiliating to go to a dance without a man of her own in tow—but like a beckoning will-o'-the-wisp, Cam's fair, handsome face materialized before her. He might ask her for a dance. It would be worth any humiliation to feel his arms around her even for a brief moment.

Lora told her mother of the invitation and asked for a new dress—"a bought dress, not a homemade," she begged. She was determined to make herself as lovely as possible in a last desperate effort to win Cam back.

"I don't see what difference it makes whether you wear a new dress or an old one." Mrs. Stanley was pessimistic. "You never seem to have any luck with men anyhow."

Her daughter rebelled at that. "No, and I never will if I don't have some clothes."

"I guess we can manage it this once." She looked at Lora appraisingly. "It ought to be blue—something to bring out the color of your eyes. Besides, men like blue."

As a result Lora went to Marcia's dance in a misty blue georgette that had come from the Glen City Bon-Ton millinery and ready-to-wear store, specializing in "Up to the minute" styles, so they advertised. It was a becoming if undistinguished dress. Lora was quite well satisfied with her own appearance until she arrived at the clubhouse and met Marcia.

Marcia, too, must have shopped before the party.

She was dressed in her favorite white, which made such a beautiful contrast with her dark skin. Her dress was new, one of the high-waisted, long-skirted kind which had heretofore reached Glen City only in fashion magazines.

Lora took one look at Marcia and discovered that her own skirt was unfashionably short, and that pale blue is a nondescript color under artificial light. Through a daze of misery she heard Marcia say:

"So glad you could come. I'll find some partners for you. You know Cam, of course."

Cam himself stepped forward with a "'Lo, beautiful."

The gay greeting awoke no pleasurable thrill this time in Lora. She sensed instinctively that it was a form of salutation he used toward all girls who were not cross-eyed and knock-kneed.

"And this is Chuck Palmer, my dancing man from New York—Miss Stanley." Marcia presented the vaudeville dancer in a way that labeled him as her own.

LORA found herself looking into a pair of very keen brown eyes, which, amazingly enough, lighted up as they rested on her.

"Don't mind him, Lora." Marcia's voice was a little sharp. She must have noted Chuck Palmer's unconcealed admiration for the other. "Mustn't turn the heads of our little town girls, Chuck." She laughed unpleasantly. "Lora's one of the shyest of the native blossoms."

Hot color swept Lora's cheeks. A grin had spread over Cam's face.

"And the most charming, I'd say." Chuck Palmer spoke up defensively as he took in Lora's anguished embarrassment.

A blare of music sounded from the ballroom.

"May I have this dance?" he asked her.

Marcia and Cam stared. Marcia was visibly annoyed. The first dance was important in Glen City, and this new man was preferring the little Stanley girl to herself. There was an angry gleam in her black eyes as Lora accepted the dancer's invitation.

"Just what I should have expected from a cheap dancer. Naturally he'd fall for a girl like Lora." Marcia turned impatiently to Cam.

From the corner of her eye Lora had seen rather than heard the words as they formed on Marcia's lips. She looked at her companion quickly, fearing that he, too, had caught the unkind comment, but Chuck Palmer's gaze was riveted on herself. He was utterly oblivious of his hostess's jealous fury.

"They're just the color of pansies." He spoke as if to himself.

"What?"

"Your eyes, I mean. I never saw eyes that color before. They're a surprise. In fact, everything about you is a surprise, a nice one."

There was an earnestness in his voice that robbed his compliment of boldness. Lora was startled, but she warmed to the admiration. She thought vaguely that Chuck Palmer was not a bad sort, and pleasantly good-looking with his thin, animated face, his really fine brown eyes, and engaging, one-sided smile.

Of course he was not tall enough nor blond enough to be handsome. Unintentionally she had set up Cameron Wells as her standard of masculine beauty.

"Why am I such a surprise?" she asked. "Or is that just a line?"

"Because—because—" The man seemed embarrassed. "I don't know how to explain, but," earnestly, "it's not a line."

"I'm sure it is." Lora was amused and teasing. "I guess Marcia was wise to warn me against you."

Chuck Palmer mopped his forehead. Finally he said:

"I won't have you think I'm just a fresh guy with a line."

"Then why am I a surprise?"

"Well," drawing a long breath, "it's this way. I sort of pictured an ideal girl. She had eyes like purple

violets, and she was little and sweet and—and she looked like you."

HIS sincerity was evident. Lora was disconcerted and a little touched. She felt relieved that they had reached the dance floor, and that further discussion was impossible. Chuck's arm encircled her waist and they glided off.

"I never knew dancing could be so perfect."

"You'll let me have the next dance then, and the next—all of them?"

Lora was flattered by his eagerness, and promised him a straight program. An instant later she regretted her hasty agreement. Cam had left Marcia and pushed his way through the crowd to ask:

"How about the next dance?"

"It's promised to me." Chuck spoke up before Lora could answer.

"But you were going somewhere with Lora." Marcia's tone was too sweet

Lora gave a little gasp of pleasure. She was dancing as never before in her life! Chuck was the perfect partner, who could sense every change of rhythm and lead her effortlessly yet faultlessly through the most intricate steps. The orchestra crashed out the final measure only too soon.

"But you're wonderful, Mr. Palmer," she cried in spontaneous admiration.

"What about yourself? I can't believe you're real. You're not only the prettiest girl I've ever seen, but the best natural dancer I know of."

"I've captured Miss Stanley for the whole evening."

"That's a lot of nerve." Cam sounded annoyed. "But I can cut in?" to Lora.

She murmured a breathless, "Yes," conscious that a shade of disappointment crossed Chuck's face.

"So he's the boy friend," he said.

The next dance had hardly begun before Cam cut in. Dreams were coming true at last. She was whirling about a dance floor with Cam's arms very tight about her. She buried her small nose against the tobacco-scented

lapel of his coat and tried to extract the utmost of sweetness from the moment.

Strangely enough she was conscious of a faint disappointment. After Chuck's perfect dancing, Cam's efforts seemed dull. She was not entirely sorry to hear Chuck's, "Break, please!"

Only when she saw Cam dancing again with Marcia did Lora remember his desirability.

After that the evening resolved itself into a blur of jazz, a succession of masculine arms, whispered compliments, dancing feet that were happily tired. Lora's success with the theatrical man had attracted the attention of eligible partners other than Cam. Men whom she had known casually for years, men whom she had never met, and men who had ignored her, began to cut in on her dances.

For once she tasted popularity. She outshone even Marcia Parsons, who watched her progress with sulphurous eyes.

Lora knew that Cam's early interest was reawakened and intensified. He cut in eagerly on her dances time and time again, and sulked visibly when other men took her away in like fashion. In one of their brief dances he took the opportunity to ask:

"How about to-morrow night?"

"I don't know. Better call me up."

Lora's new popularity had given her confidence, and she was trying coquetry. Cam would not find her a too easy conquest this time.

"All right. I'll telephone you at six."

Her heart leaped at the success of her feminine guile. He seemed all the more eager for her hesitation.

Of course she would give him a date when he called up. For that reason Lora discouraged Chuck Palmer's request to join him after the theater the next evening.

"But the night after?" He was insistent.

"Maybe."

She was not committing herself. Perhaps Cam would want the following night also.

IT was a glorious party, the most wonderful in Lora's experience, but when her mother asked her the next morning if she had a good time, she answered with an evasive, "Uh-uh! Pretty good."

The memory of her success was still too sweet to share with any one. She had a half-formed fear that it might prove to be only a dream.

Not until the telephone rang a few minutes later, and she heard Chuck Palmer's voice over the wire, did she dare believe that what had happened was real.

"It's awfully early," Chuck began, "and I hate to disturb you, but it's frightfully important."

"Yes?" Lora was puzzled by the note of urgency in his voice.

"I'm in an awful jam," he went on. "My dancing partner, Maida Myers, just called, and she's got chicken pox. Think of it—chicken pox at her age! Can you beat that?" He groaned.

Lora murmured polite sympathy, wondering why Maida Myers and her chicken pox had caused this early morning call.

Chuck explained quickly.

"I was thinking—I don't know what you'll think of this, but you're such a darned good dancer—I want to ask you if you'll take her place and finish out the week in the act with me."

He wanted her to dance with him—on the stage!

Was she living in a fairy tale? First,

she had found popularity. Now the ambition of a lifetime was about to be realized. She was going to dance with a real professional before an important audience!

She tried to speak, but words choked in her throat from excitement.

"We'll have to play three shows a day. It's a tough job, and you may not like it. Also we'll have a lot of rehearsing to do. It 'll be hard work—no fooling. I wouldn't blame you at all if you refused."

She heard Chuck's deprecating voice as from afar.

"So say 'No' if you want to, and there'll be no hard feelings."

"But I don't want to say 'No.' I'm crazy about the idea." Lora found her voice finally.

"You won't be after you've tried it." Chuck knew his three-a-day. "But you're a darned good sport to help me out." Then in a practical manner: "We'll have to start rehearsing right away. How soon can you get to the theater?"

Lora hesitated. "I'll have to fix things up with mother." In her excitement she had forgotten that she might encounter opposition from Mrs. Stanley.

"As soon as you can make it then," said Chuck. "Thanks, and good-by."

"Who was it? Did he ask you for a date?" Mrs. Stanley had caught the echo of a masculine voice over the wire and was all agog.

"Marcia Parsons's cousin, Chuck Palmer," slowly. Lora was putting the best face possible on the matter by mentioning Chuck's connection with the local society girl.

Mrs. Stanley smiled approvingly.

"He wants me to dance with him at the Palace this week." Lora decided that directness was the best course.

"He has a vaudeville act, and his partner's sick."

"YOU want to dance—on the stage?"

"It's just for a few days," hurriedly. "It 'll be a—a lark."

Her mother considered the matter. "Well, if he's Marcia Parsons's cousin he must be a nice chap. I don't suppose it 'll do you any harm," she said thoughtfully, "and maybe you'll make enough to pay for your dress."

Lora hadn't thought of money, but she exulted at her easy victory.

"Of course, if you'd got anywhere with Cameron Wells I'd never consent," Mrs. Stanley continued.

"Why?" in dismay.

"He might not like to have you appear in public. Men are queer."

Lora had not considered this phase of the matter. She made an instinctive movement toward the telephone. She would call Chuck and tell him his suggestion was impossible. She couldn't risk Cam's reawakened interest.

Then she paused.

Chuck was offering her a first, and perhaps only chance at the stage. Ever since she had been a child she had felt the call of the footlights. Besides, Chuck had been kind to her. She would be ungrateful to disappoint him. It was the age-old battle between love and ambition.

Perhaps if she had been sure of love, ambition would have gone overboard. As it was, Lora slipped into a coat, pulled a little felt hat down on her soft, dark curls, and hurried to the theater.

Chuck was awaiting her impatiently. His manner was friendly but businesslike as he helped her off with her coat and rushed her to the stage. Lora was a trifle piqued at the impersonality.

She was no longer his "ideal girl"—just a dancing partner.

"We'd better get going right away," he said. "It 'll probably take all day to teach you the routine. Luckily the manager has consented to leave off the act to-day at the first two performances, so that 'll give us six good hours to practice."

With some misgivings Lora faced the prospect of a grueling six-hour rehearsal, followed by her first public appearance.

"You'll have a regular first night," Chuck told her. "The manager's going to play you up in the evening paper as a local star, so probably all your friends will be on hand."

Lora pictured an audience of critical home-town people. "Oh, but that will be terrible. I'm scared to death."

"Forget it," sternly. "You mustn't even think of stage fright."

Lora tried to banish her fears by concentrating on the scene around her.

It was the first time she had ever seen a stage except from out front. In the cold light of morning it looked very unromantic, bleak and shoddy. Stage carpenters were hammering noisily somewhere back stage, almost drowning out the tinkle of the rheumatic piano which furnished music for the rehearsal.

"One, two, three — break! That's it! Now try it again." Chuck put her through a series of steps.

Lora had thought that she knew something about dancing, but even old, familiar steps eluded her.

"Take it easy. Nothing to worry about." Chuck's calm, businesslike voice encouraged her from time to time. "This is a very simple time step. Every chorus girl knows it."

"But I'm not a chorus girl."

Chuck was instantly contrite. "Gosh, I'm sorry. I forgot you're new to this racket, kidbiff!" He pulled out his watch. "Let's get a bite of lunch and then try it again. There's a show here this afternoon, so I've engaged the I. O. F. hall for a few hours. This game is a tough one for a newcomer, but we'll get those steps yet. We can't put on a flop to-night."

In spite of his kindliness, Lora sensed that he was a hard taskmaster, where his profession was concerned. Dancing was his life work, and he went at it with a singleness of purpose, a steely concentration that she couldn't help but admire. Yet she resented his cold, matter-of-fact manner during the rehearsals. Before the afternoon was over she felt that she would go mad if she heard again his merciless:

"One, two, three—break!"

EVERY bone in her body ached. Her head throbbed with weariness. Her feet were painful, unresponsive clods. Just when it seemed that human flesh could stand no more, Chuck exclaimed joyously as a boy:

"You've got it!"

She could only stare at him, unbelieving the good news.

"You'll get by all right to-night now. We'll call it quits for the day. Better run home, get a bite of dinner, and be back at the theater in time to rehearse once with the orchestra before the show." He dismissed her briskly, but as he held out her coat for her his businesslike air vanished. "It's been a tough day, but you've been wonderful, Lora," he whispered. "You'll raise 'em all out of their seats."

Lora was too tired to care much whether she made a hit or not. Theatrical life had lost some of its glamour for her. She was beginning to realize that a stage career meant more than

applause and flowers. It called for painful, unremitting hard work, continuous study, and the sacrifice of normal, natural pleasures and friends.

With a pang she remembered that Cam was calling her at six to ask for a date. She would have to put him off. If possible she would persuade him to meet her after the show.

Cam, however, gave her no chance to make such an arrangement. He had been confident that she would give him the evening, and he went into a huff as soon as she mentioned her theatrical plans.

"So you're turning me down for a cheap hoofer." He was irritated.

"Chuck Palmer may be a hoofer, but he's nice." Lora was a loyal little soul, and she had to defend Chuck, who had been kind to her.

"You think so?" sarcastically. "You don't know the type at all. I've met plenty of his kind, and I'm telling you right now he's no good. But you're just like most girls. You'll pass up old friends for any stranger that comes to town."

"But, Cam, it's not Chuck personally." Lora tried to explain in spite of her listener's unfairness. "I'd like to be with you, but I promised to be his partner, just in the act you see. Besides you passed me up for Marcia not so long ago."

The thrust was lost on Cam. "I see plenty. I see that you prefer another man to me."

"But I don't! I—"

But Lora was talking to empty wires. Cam had hung up.

ON top of her weariness the quarrel with Cam was the final straw that reduced Lora to complete misery. In choked silence she ate her dinner and prepared to return to the theater which assumed in her imagination the appearance of a torture chamber.

"You're late." Chuck was all business when she arrived breathless with haste. "We've got only twenty minutes to squeeze in a dress rehearsal before the first call."

Lora was too crushed to resent his implied reproof with more than a frown. Silently she followed him down a flight of narrow, dark stairs to the dressing rooms.

"This is yours." He pushed back a creaking door.

"Not this hole?" Lora was appalled at the sight of the tiny, dusty, brick-walled room in which she was supposed to dress.

Chuck laughed at that. "It's pretty terrible, isn't it? But these are the kind of dressing rooms you always find in three-a-day houses." He left her with a final admonition to hurry.

Lora struggled into a silver and net dress that had belonged to Chuck's previous partner. She noticed with fastidious distaste that it was soiled and tarnished.

"It's just like everything about the stage," she said to herself. "It looks lovely if you're not too close."

"You're a knock-out in that outfit." Chuck dissipated her doubts about the silver and net dress when she joined him in the wings.

"Of course your make-up's all wrong, but I'll help you with that after the rehearsal. We'll have time enough as we're spotted fifth."

The orchestra was already swinging into the music to which she had danced all afternoon, but the rhythm was somehow different and more difficult to catch. Lora was frightened and uncertain of her steps, but Chuck appeared satisfied.

"You did better than I'd hoped," he said. "A dress rehearsal is always much worse than the actual performance. They say in the Big Town that a bum dress rehearsal means a good show."

Lora smiled tremulously. "You're just trying to cheer me up. I know I'm an awful flop." Her eyes filled with tears at the thought of her approaching failure.

"That's silly talk. Let's not hear any more of it." Chuck was gruff.

"I think you're the rudest man I ever met." Anger flared up in Lora at his tone.

"Atta girl. I'd rather see you sore than weepy on an opening night." Chuck laughed at her show of temper.

"You tried to make me mad on purpose?"

"Sure thing. I wanted to get you pepped up so you'd put on your best stuff to-night in the act."

"I don't believe you care about anything but your darned old act," Lora pouted.

"Well, I don't know about that," Chuck answered slowly, "but my work does mean a lot to me. For one thing, it's my living. Besides that I love it. You haven't been long enough in this game to understand how it gets you, how you dream and hope and pray that some day you'll hit the Big Time, see your name in the 'lights,' know that you've reached the top." His voice had grown tense.

Lora again felt the strength of him. She had never before known a man who had set for himself such a definite aim in life.

"But I'm not always such a bear as I seem in working hours." Chuck's engaging one-sided smile flashed upon her. "I'd like to show you how nice I can be. Does that date you had last night still hold? If not, maybe you'd join me for a bit of supper after the show."

"I have no date." Lora sighed. "It—it's broken."

"Your pretty blond boy didn't like the idea of your dancing here with me?" Chuck made a keen guess.

"Not exactly." His sympathetic yet penetrating brown gaze drew the truth from her.

"He'll get over it," optimistically.

"You don't understand." She had small hope that Cam would forgive the blow she had dealt his vanity in shelving him for this theatrical venture. Her hold on him was too fragile. He would turn again to Marcia Parsons.

THE curtain raiser was under way, and Lora for the time being was obliged to put aside her worries while Chuck showed her the proper way to make up her face for the footlights. As he daubed with powder, mascara and lip stick, he gave last instructions.

"Don't think of the audience—don't think of yourself. Just listen to the music, and remember that you're on the stage to dance—nothing else."

To distract her while waiting their turn, he let her watch the other acts from the wings. Lora was again surprised to note how much less young and beautiful the performers appeared from back stage than from out front. Most of them were anywhere from twenty-five to thirty-five years old—and older, and their faces were etched with fine lines of privation and worry.

"They're all old and tired-looking," she whispered to Chuck.

"You age fast in this game. Touring the three-a-day is no cinch, but there's a fascination about this theatrical business that holds you." His eyes

looked dreamy for a minute. "And then there's always the chance of making Broadway."

Lora could see little fascination in the prospect at the present moment. She was dead tired. Her face burned and her hands were like ice from fright. The monologist who had occupied the stage made his exit to a barrage of laughs.

The orchestra struck up. It was the music for her dance.

"That's our cue." Chuck gave her an encouraging pat on the shoulder.

Why had she ever wanted to appear on a stage?

"Steady now."

There was a pounding in her ears, and she could scarcely hear Chuck's warning.

"Remember," he said. "Don't worry about the audience. Just dance!"

DANCE! Her feet felt paralyzed, but automatically they carried her onto the stage. A wave of giddiness assailed her as she saw the myriad eyes fixed upon her—smiling eyes, friendly eyes, bored eyes, critical eyes. From the blur, one face, one pair of blue eyes drew her own like a magnet. Cam's! He was seated right in the center of the third row. And at his side was Marcia Parsons! Her black eyes were hostile and scornful.

Lora wanted to run, to hide in some dark corner. She was going to fail miserably. She could never dance. Marcia would sneer then. And she and Cam would laugh.

"Come on, kidbiff. Don't let me down." Chuck's aside was like a bracing dash of cold water in Lora's face.

Courage returned. She couldn't let him down. She must make good, "click," as he called it. Her feet were moving now into the routine he had taught her. The familiar music carried her along from step to step.

"Splendid!" Chuck panted encouragement during a turn of the dance.

The approving handclaps that followed their first number seconded his verdict. Her audience liked her! She was making a success. Marcia, Cam, no one could laugh at her.

Lora went through the second dance in their act with a new fire. Her feet twinkled and tapped. Weariness was forgotten, and she gave gladly the encore demanded by enthusiastic customers.

She backed off the stage to a steady beat of applause, and even a last glimpse of Cam, bending over Marcia in deep conversation, could not entirely dim Lora's exhilaration.

"I knew you'd be a wow!" Chuck seized her small hands in his, and whirled her through the wings in a triumphant waltz clog. "And now we'll take off the grease paint and go out to celebrate your first night." He was taking for granted that since her date was broken she would accept his invitation.

"I'm too tired to celebrate much." Lora was doubtful.

"Of course, you poor little thing." Chuck's tone was tender. "But it won't take long to wrap ourselves around some ham and eggs. That's the trouper's special, you know."

"All right." A supper with Chuck would keep away, for a while at least, that nagging picture of Cam talking so earnestly to Marcia.

"Fine! And wait a minute." Chuck stopped her just as she was about to enter her dressing room. "I want to give you something."

He disappeared into his own room and brought out a small, square florist's box. "For your opening night."

Lora opened the box and gave a little cry of delight. Inside was a small bunch of violets. "You're a darling to think of flowers."

"Flowers and openings kind of go together." He slid back into his own room as if confused by her gratitude.

LORA put the violets carefully in a glass of water on her dressing table, and with fingers that were awkward and inexperienced, began removing her make-up. She was immersed in cold cream when a rap sounded on the door.

"Who is it?"

"Cam!" said a voice outside. "May I come in?"

"Oh!" The exclamation was a happy trill. "In one second." She rubbed off the cold cream vigorously and opened the door.

"Mad at me?" Cam was grinning at her boyishly.

"I don't know." It was impossible to be very angry when he stood before her so handsome and grinned so coaxingly.

"That's good." Cam took her forgiveness as a matter of course. "You see I'm going to step you out to-night. We're going places and do things."

Lora's eyes fell on the flowers. Her face clouded as she remembered her engagement to eat ham and eggs with Chuck.

"What's the matter?" Cam noticed her dismay.

"I have a date with Chuck," she said.

"Oh, that's all right." Cam brushed aside her refusal. "I saw Palmer outside, and he showed me the way to your dressing room. He said to tell you that he just remembered having a long distance call coming in at the hotel and was dashing along."

"He did?" Resentment mingled with Lora's relief. Of course she was glad to be free to go with Cam, but Chuck might have consulted her before rushing off like that.

"Guess he knows you're my girl all right," Cam said with a proprietary air. "And believe me, I'm proud of you. Golly, Lora, you were marvelous to-night. Our whole gang is talking about you. They were all there, and they're waiting for us by the box office."

"I'm too tired for a party." Lora was somewhat irked by the way Cam took her success as a personal triumph.

"Gosh, I'd counted on stepping you out and taking a rise out of the rest of the fellows in the crowd. They were all keen to date you up, but I told them I had the inside track."

"You can drive me home if you want to, but that's all." Her manner was curt. She was discovering the truth of the old adage that nothing succeeds like success. Had she failed in her dance and made herself ridiculous before his friends, Cam would never have been here seeking her company.

"If you say so." He agreed to her wishes, but he was plainly disappointed.

He had recovered his good-humor, however, by the time the Yellow Devil pulled up in front of her curb. "Let's sit and talk awhile," he said.

"No, I must go in. It's been a hard day."

"Don't forget you've got a standing date with me every night this week." Cam still delayed her. "I don't want you running out with any of those show people. It was a bad mistake of Marcia's to introduce that Palmer fellow to our crowd. He's not our sort."

"He seems nice enough," Lora said.

"He may be nice enough, but he's not nice enough for you. You're my girl."

As if that were a special distinction! Lora extended her hand a shade impatiently. "Good night, Cam."

He paid no attention to her dismissal, but gripped her hand tightly in his. He was pulling her toward him. His fair head shone in the moonlight as he bent over her.

"No!" Lora pushed him away. "Good night."

"That's all right." Cam was not offended. "Your kisses will be all the sweeter for the waiting. Good night, beautiful. See you to-morrow night—same time—same place."

A TELEPHONE call from Chuck came only too early the next morning. He wanted her to come to the theater at once for another rehearsal.

"But is it necessary?" Lora asked crossly. She was only half awake.

"I practice every day, new and old steps. All dancers have to, if they want to keep limber."

Lora groaned as another illusion about the stage disappeared. She had thought that once you had learned an act that you had nothing to do but make your daily appearances on the stage.

Other unglamorous details of theatrical life unfolded themselves during the next two days. She met the various troupers on the bill, and found them to be very prosaic and dull, not at all the picturesque creatures of her imaginings.

The dashing vamp in the melodramatic skit was off stage the most domestic of women, and spent her time between shows, darning socks for the "heavy," who was also her husband. The man with the comic monologue was a frightful bore in private life, and talked incessantly of the duck farm he was saving up to buy. The baby-faced girl who sang like an angel swore continuously and efficiently when she was not singing.

"How do you ever stand this life week in and week out?" Lora asked Chuck. They were snatching a hasty dinner at a lunch counter between shows.

"One gets used to it, and even likes it."

"I never could." Lora denied the suggestion vigorously.

"I'm sorry." Chuck looked disappointed. "Of course I hadn't really expected you to like it, but I was hoping. You see, I had a letter from Maida — my old partner — and she's jumping the act for good. She got some funny idea that she's been a drag on me—but I might as well let you see the letter." He tossed over a scrawled piece of note paper.

Lora read it aloud:

DEAR CHUCK:

By the time you get this I'll be on the choo-choo train headed for the Big Town. The chicken pox, old dear, was just a stall. I knew it was time for me to pull out of the act. You were too darned big-hearted to fire me. I'm not so young as I used to was, and I've been just excess baggage on this tour.

There's a guy back in lil ole Noo Yawk who wants me to do a strut with him to the tune of the Lohengrin and I'm signing up. So it's good-by and God bless you, Chuck Palmer—the whitest guy I ever met!

I heard your new partner's a wow. Here's luck to you both.

MAIDA MYERS.

Chuck blushed when Lora came to that part about "the whitest guy I ever met."

"Maida's a great bunk slinger," he

said hastily. "Naturally I couldn't hand her the gate just because she was getting old. Several years ago when I was a kid trying to crash Broadway, she staked me when I was broke, hungry and sick."

Lora's violet eyes widened. She had thought Chuck hard. Yet he had, out of gratitude and kindness, kept on a partner who, by her own admission, was a liability rather than an asset.

"I THINK I agree with Maida that you're a very white guy," she said gravely.

"Oh, forget it." Chuck was reduced to complete confusion. "If I'd remembered that bushwa was in the letter I'd never have shown it to you. I just wanted you to see what she said about my new partner—that's you."

"She seems to think I'm going to stay in the act."

"Yes, and that's what I'm hoping, Lora."

"I'd like to if I could, but—oh, it's impossible."

"I know it, and I suppose you're wise. It's no life for a girl like you." But in spite of his ready agreement, Chuck looked disappointed. "You were made for marriage, a home, all those things. I suppose you and Wells have fixed it all up?"

Lora realized that genuine interest rather than curiosity prompted the comment and answered honestly, "Not yet."

"You like Wells a lot, don't you?"

"Yes," slowly, "but—" Chuck had the rare quality of sympathy that inspired confidences. "But I don't know if he likes me."

"How could he help it?"

"He's interested now because I'm sort of a local celebrity, because other men are keen to date me up." Lora's worries came out in a rush. "I'm really a dull, uninteresting sort of person. Everybody used to call me the 'little Stanley girl from across the tracks.' I was just a nobody, and I will be again once this week is over and you're gone and I'm not a stage dancer any more."

Chuck considered the matter. "He's the kind of a man you ought to marry, no doubt," he said at length in a tired sort of voice. "He has money, social position, everything. And you love him. Well," as if reaching a conclusion, "there's only one thing for you to do."

Lora stared at him in surprise.

"You've got to strike while the iron's hot—bring him to a decisive point this week."

"But how?"

"Make him think that he's going to lose you. Is there any other man he's jealous of?"

"Only you." Lora made the confession in some embarrassment.

"Then use me." Chuck's eyes were inscrutable. "Tell him you've decided or almost decided to go on the road with me and the act next week."

"Do you think it would work?"

"I'm sure it will. From what I know of Wells, he's the kind of a bird who wants only what somebody else wants. If he thinks I want you, he'll want you."

"You don't like him, do you?" Lora asked unexpectedly.

"He's all right." Chuck evaded a direct answer and rose from his stool, leaving his dinner half eaten. "I'll meet you later at the theater."

"But what are you going to do about a partner?" she delayed him to ask. In spite of the fact that she had agreed to help him out only for the week, she felt a little guilty about leaving him without a team mate.

"Oh, I'll find another girl before long. I can do a single for a week or two." He was apparently undisturbed.

LORA frowned. For some unaccountable reason she did not relish the idea of another girl filling her place, working with Chuck, and taking a share of their nightly applause. She shook off such vain regrets. She had had her fill of the show business. She was revolted by the grime, the squalor and the unending hard work. In a few years she might be like Maida Myers, a girl who had grown old in the show business, and who had depended on a partner's generosity for her job.

Her mother, and Chuck himself, said that she was made for marriage and a home. They were right. She would be infinitely happier as a sheltered wife, than as a vaudeville trouper in the three-a-day.

As a wife—Cam's wife—she would have one of the nicest homes in town, a car, leisure, and friends. Cam could give her all these things—if he would.

It was a big "if."

As she had told Chuck, Cam was for the moment fascinated by the glamour that surrounded her as a dancer. He was proud of her, in spite of his slighting references to theatrical people. Only last night he had said:

"I'm going to give a big party for you before you finish with the show. We'll have all the who's who in town. I want to show off my girl," gloatingly.

They had settled on Friday night as the best evening for the affair, and had gone over a list of guests.

Lora had been pleased but a little disturbed as she sensed how much pride and a desire for display figured in Cam's attentions.

"I don't believe you'd like me a bit if I weren't somebody you could show off to your friends." She ventured to put her thoughts into words.

"Why, Lora," in a hurt tone, "don't you want a party? You know I've always liked you." He tried to slip an arm around her.

Lora evaded the caress. Somehow she couldn't forget how he had deserted her at a first glimpse of Marcia Parsons. She was beginning to see Cam's faults very clearly, but at the same time she saw the charm of him, his desirability and masculine beauty. She had suffered so much during those wretched weeks that he was rushing Marcia.

Lora shivered at the remembrance and vowed not to lose him a second time.

She might tell him, as Chuck had suggested, that she was thinking of signing up for a vaudeville tour. It would be a good ruse, but it savored of trickery.

Yet other girls, she argued with herself, did that sort of thing. Ruth Carter had once jokingly told how she got a proposal out of Tommie by faking a telegram from another man. Perhaps lovers had to be prodded into action. Lora decided to resort to such measures only as a last resort.

THAT evening she tried to find out what Cam's attitude would be after she had settled back into her old normal life.

"I won't be a show girl much longer," she said. "Saturday night it 'll all be over."

"You'll find it rather dull, won't you?"

"Maybe, but I'll have a lot more time to see people."

"I suppose so." He did not offer

to date her up for the following week.

"Of course I may go on with the act."

Lora grew desperate.

He was instantly alert. "What's the matter, can't you part with your hoofer?"

"He wants me to go on a vaudeville tour with him."

"You mustn't think of such a thing," angrily.

"Why not? It might be fun—as Chuck's partner." She was increasingly ashamed of the part she was playing, but she had gone too far with her pretense to withdraw.

Lora sprang to her feet, white with anger, and turned on Cam

"I told you once before he's not our sort. He's a cheap, common hoofer," Cam said stiffly. "I won't hear of you going on the road with him."

"I wish you wouldn't say horrid things about Chuck. He's a friend of mine." Lora resented Cam's unfair back-biting and forgot the purpose of the discussion.

"You sound proud of the fact," sneeringly.

"I am!"

"I suppose you think he's pretty hot stuff?"

"I don't think anything except that he's one of the whitest men I ever met." Unconsciously she quoted from Maida Myers's letter.

"He's not even a gentleman." Cam snorted with rage. "I've been talking

to Marcia Parsons about him. He's not a real cousin of hers at all, and belongs to one of the poorer branches of their family. She says she only asked him to her dance as a stunt. He has no family, no background, no money, no education—nothing!"

He paused triumphantly.

"What difference do those things make?" Lora could not resist trying to puncture his self-satisfaction.

"I'll show you in one evening just what difference they make." Cam was fairly beside himself with anger. "Just wait until the party Friday night and I'll show up your little hero. Then maybe you won't be so keen about touring around the country with him. Maybe you'll be willing to listen to what I have to say."

Lora was too furious herself at the moment to care a great deal what he might have to say. She went into the house with a brief nod of farewell.

"Just wait until Friday night," Cam called after her.

WHAT did he mean by that? He had threatened to show up Chuck. She was a little worried, but she was becoming used to Cam's unreasonable tempers. His threat was probably meaningless.

As she undressed for bed she reviewed the recent scene. She had tried to make Cam commit himself, and had succeeded only in quarreling with him over Chuck.

"You're not very clever at managing men," she told her pyjama-clad reflection in the mirror, and laughed ruefully.

She could not be completely sorry for rebuking Cam. It would have been impossible to stand by and let him say mean, hateful things about Chuck.

Chuck was always so kind and considerate, except in working hours. It had been sweet of him to give her those violets on her first night. He might be hard at times, but again he was amazingly gentle. It was wonderful the way he had treated Maida Myers. No, he was not "cheap and common," as Cam said. He was very fine—very much a man.

At the theater next day, Lora was reminded again of Cam's queer parting threat.

"I'm invited out in society again tomorrow night," Chuck said. "Your boy friend called up and asked me to a brawl he's throwing for you out at the club."

"You aren't going?" in dismay.

"Why, I accepted. Didn't you want me to go?" Hurt surprise shone in Chuck's brown eyes.

"Of course," hastily, "but I thought you weren't keen about after-theater parties."

"Not as a rule." He appeared relieved at her explanation. "You can't stay up all night and expect to give your best on the stage. But I'll make this party an exception, seeing it's for you. I won't have many more chances to see you after this week." There was a note of wistfulness in his voice, but his smile was bright enough.

Lora was in a predicament. If she asked Chuck not to go to the party he would misunderstand her motives and think that she simply did not want him there. Yet if he went, and were hurt and insulted, it would be her fault.

Cam's warning rang in her ears. "Just wait until Friday night and I'll show up your little hero." Was he planning to humiliate Chuck in some way or was he merely bragging?

She tried to reopen the subject again with Cam when he called for her after the show.

"You asked Chuck to the party tomorrow night, didn't you?" she began.

"Yes, might as well. I can pick you both up at the theater." Cam was either being cautious or he had forgotten his wild statements of the previous evening.

Lora decided that the latter must be the case. Cam might be hot tempered and unfair at times, but after all he was too well-bred to hurt and shame one of his own guests.

In any case, Chuck would not be an easy person to humiliate or abash. Lora thought she had never seen any one who was better poised. At Marcia's party he had been the most distinguished man present, not even excepting Cam. Chuck had rubbed shoulders with the great and the near-great in the Big Town, and could handle a bunch of small-town society.

Lora dismissed her fears as groundless, and began looking forward to the party with youthful glee.

IT was fun to roll up to the clubhouse the next evening in Cam's Yellow Devil, with Chuck in the rumble seat. Was it less than a week ago she had come to Marcia's party humbly trailing the married Carters? Now she was making a triumphal entry with Cam on one side of her and Chuck on the other.

"One would think you were popular, Lora," said Marcia cattily.

The barbed greeting was ignored.

Marcia, of course, hated to see another usurp her place as the most sought-after girl in Glen City. Men who had once trailed her were now flocking about Lora, congratulating her on her stage success, and chaffing Cam about being a "lucky stiff." She was evidently labeled with the crowd as "Cameron Wells's girl."

Cam led her to a seat next to his at the head of the long supper table. It was almost as if she were already his wife, helping him entertain his friends. All of Glen City society watched, and Lora heard whispers, "almost engaged —maybe they'll announce it to-night," and the like.

"And you here, Palmer." Cam was helping his guests find their places. He motioned Chuck to a seat beside Marcia Parsons.

Chuck spoke to her pleasantly, but Marcia looked through him. She had not forgotten the way he had shown his preference for Lora at the last party. Lora, watching, was glad to see that Chuck appeared in no way disconcerted. He even looked amused at her evident hostility.

"I thought you'd rather be up at this end and with the few people you know, old man," Cam turned to him with over-emphasized cordiality. "It's sometimes tough for an outsider to talk to a lot of people of a different class."

Chuck raised his eyebrows. He seemed to doubt whether insult were intended.

"I don't suppose you see much of society on the road." Marcia took up the baiting.

Lora was tugging reproachfully at Cam's coat sleeve, but he paid no attention. "You needn't feel embarrassed, though," he said with a show of generosity toward Chuck. "We all understand."

"I'll ask you if I get mixed up on the spoons and forks." Chuck's retort was dryly humorous.

Lora was very proud of him.

Cam's face flushed with anger as he felt himself at a disadvantage.

The whole table was listening now.

"I wasn't talking about things like

forks and spoons," he said sullenly. "I suppose you learned how to use those eating around in restaurants."

"What are you talking about?" Chuck's voice had hardened. His good-natured smile vanished.

Cam blinked at the directness of the inquiry.

"Oh, we all know, Mr. Palmer, that you're at a disadvantage in breeding, education, position, and that sort of thing." Marcia helped Cam out of his momentary abashment. She was taking revenge savagely.

"That's it." Cam agreed with her quickly.

"I don't see the object of all this." Chuck pushed back his chair from the table. "If you folks here are trying to prove that I'm a fellow without money, position, or education, you're going to a lot of useless trouble. It's already proved. I admit it. My father died when I was fourteen. I left school to go to work at the one thing I could do well—hoofing! And that's what I am, a hoofer."

There was a gallant dignity about him as he faced the dumfounded company.

A HOOFER he was, but a man—fine, strong and gentle. A fierce, proud tenderness welled up in Lora as she looked at him.

"You're a gentleman, Chuck," she said. Then, with eyes ablaze and face white with anger, she whirled on Cam. "That's more than any one could say about you, Cameron Wells. You talk about education and breeding," scornfully. "You haven't even the rudiments of a good education or good manners or you'd never insult a guest at your own table. You're—"

"Lora!" Chuck stopped her. "This is mighty fine of you, but you'll regret it." He had risen from the table. With a "Good night," for Lora alone, he was gone.

She sprang up. Cam tried to stop her, but she shook off his detaining hand.

Marcia's cool, mocking voice followed her as she ran across the room. "Oh, let her go, Cam. Birds of a feather, you know."

Cam's reply was inaudible, because Lora was racing to overtake Chuck.

"Wait, I'm going with you."

Chuck turned at her breathless plea. "Why, Lora, what does this mean?"

"I hate them!" She pointed back to the dining room. "They're a lot of snobs and cats." She reached out appealing hands. "I never want to see them again. Take me away."

"Gee, Lora." He was a trifle dazed. Her hands were in his now, and he was very close. Their eyes met for dizzying seconds. Lora swayed nearer to him. There was a strange hunger within her, a mad desire to feel his arms around her. His fingers were tightening on hers.

"You're sweet—sweet—sweet!" He breathed the words very softly, but then, as if shaking off some spell, he released her hands. "No, you must go back to your Cam," he said. "You're upset. You don't know what you're doing."

"But I don't want to go back."

"Yes, you do," firmly. "I'll see you to-morrow afternoon at the theater. We won't have any rehearsal in the morning—since it's our last day." He changed swiftly to his most practical manner.

As Lora stood hesitant and uncertain, he gave her a tiny shove that sent her almost into the arms of Cam, who came up in hot pursuit.

"Lora, you aren't going to leave the

party—leave me?" Cam began to plead with her.

Lora scarcely heard him. She was staring after Chuck. Her face wore the expression of an awakened sleepwalker.

"I didn't mean to go so far with my razzing, and I didn't think you'd care." Cam sounded very apologetic. "I told you I was going to show him up. Maybe I was rude and ill-bred, but it was just because I was jealous. I thought you preferred Palmer to me, and I'm wild about you, Lora."

"Please! Don't go on, Cam."

"But I must. Won't you forgive me and listen to me?" He pulled her almost by main force into the club library where they would be unobserved.

"I'll do anything—ask Palmer's pardon, if you insist—anything, Lora," Cam cried wildly. "Only say that things are right with us again. Don't you know I love you—that I want to marry you? We can make this party an engagement party."

LORA was listening to the long awaited proposal. Cam stood before her, handsome and more charming than ever in his humility. His blue eyes besought her, but between them hovered a pair of brown eyes, very grave and kind and understanding.

"I'm sorry, Cam," she said firmly, "but what you ask is impossible now."

"You're still angry at me. You'll feel differently about things to-morrow." Cam was not to be rebuffed. "I won't take 'No' for an answer."

"My answer 'll be just the same to-morrow. And please, I want to go."

Both Cam and Chuck agreed that she didn't know her own mind, and yet Lora had never been more calm and sure of herself.

"I don't believe it. I'll take you home now if you really want to go. But I'm coming to see you to-morrow for my answer—the right answer!"

It was useless to argue with him. Perhaps by to-morrow's cold daylight she could convince him that she was in earnest when she refused his love, his wealth, his social position.

Lora knew what she was giving up, but she could not do otherwise. She could never marry a man whom she no longer loved. Cam, of a sudden, had lost all his old fascination for her. She liked him never more than during their silent ride home from the clubhouse. He reminded her of a thoroughly chastened small boy. But she didn't want to marry a boy.

She wanted a man—a man who could be hard and yet amazingly gentle.

"I'll be around in the morning," Cam said on leaving. "So have your answer ready."

"It's ready now, Cam. You've had it."

"I don't hear you at all."

LORA tossed through a sleepless night, but morning found her decision unchanged.

"I'm awfully sorry," she told Cam when he arrived eager and hopeful shortly before noon. "It's still 'No.'"

There was a quiet finality about her that could not be misunderstood.

Cam fumbled with his hat. He seemed unable to understand what had happened to him. "So I'm being turned down, given the air—given the air!" He repeated the phrase twice. "Gosh, I never thought it of you, Lora."

"You'll forget me soon." Lora knew that she spoke the truth.

Cam's vanity was suffering more

than his love. His desire for her was a mushroom thing, fostered by glamour and competition.

That was not love, as Lora had learned it in the last twenty-four hours.

The outer door banged behind him.

"What in the world did Cameron Wells want at this time of day?" Lora's mother came into the living room, fairly bursting with curiosity.

"He wanted me to marry him."

"Darling child!" Mrs. Stanley was in raptures. "I'm so happy."

"I refused him." Lora cut short the gushing.

"You—you refused!" Mrs. Stanley dropped into the nearest chair. "But why—why—why?" hysterically.

"Because I'm going on a vaudeville tour with Mr. Palmer!"

"You passed up a chance to marry the wealthiest young man in town to race around the country in a vaudeville act?" The older woman seemed unable to believe her ears. "Oh—oh—oh!" It was a moan of despair. "I never saw such a girl. I wash my hands of you from now on." She flounced toward the door.

With her hand on the knob she paused. "There's something behind this. I think you're in love with that dancing man," she said accusingly.

"I am!" Lora made her confession in a proud little voice.

SHE loved Chuck Palmer! Somewhere, somehow, he had kindled a spark in her heart that last night had leaped into a consuming flame and obliterated her schoolgirlish infatuation for Cam. She must have been blind not to have seen before that it was Chuck—her fine, strong, wonderful Chuck—whom she loved.

Mrs. Stanley looked a trifle consoled. Romance of any sort was meat and drink to her. "Is he in love with you?" she asked.

"I don't know," Lora said sadly. She had thought at times that Chuck was attracted to her. When they first met he had called her his ideal girl, but during the past week he had been businesslike and distant. He had even suggested ways and means to captivate Cam. Surely a man who loved a girl would not assist her in an affair with another man.

Lora sighed. "I don't think he does," she added.

Her one hope was to stay with him in the act and try to awaken his love. Much as she hated the three-a-day, Lora was prepared to throw in her lot with his and follow where he led. Chuck would compensate her for all the privations and hardships of vaudeville life.

Her color was very high and her eyes bright as she rapped on his dressing room door that afternoon before the matinée. She would tell him that she wanted to keep on as his partner. If only he had not found some other girl already!

Lora stopped in a panic at the thought.

"Come in!"

She turned the knob of the door timidly.

He was hunched in a dejected attitude over his dressing table and did not look up at her entrance.

"Chuck!"

His face lighted as she whispered his name. For a moment neither spoke. Embarrassment swept Lora and deepened the flush on her cheeks. Chuck was plainly waiting an explanation of her call.

"I—I wanted to tell you something," she began.

"About your engagement to Wells, I suppose." Chuck was trying to help her out. "Congratulations!"

"No!" impatiently. She stamped her foot. "That's all off."

Chuck jumped in surprise. "But I thought—Lora, did I cause trouble between you last night?"

He was making things frightfully difficult.

Lora drew a long breath and started afresh. "It hasn't anything to do with Cam—what I was going to say. You see I don't want to marry him. I couldn't! Oh, don't you see, Chuck? I—I just want to keep on in this act as your partner."

"You want to troupe the three-a-day?" Chuck was amazed. "I thought you were fed up with the vaudeville business."

"I was—I am—but I—I want to be with you."

Lora stopped aghast at the extent of her admission.

"Lora, do you mean that?" he said huskily. He took a quick step toward her.

Shyness and sudden fright prevented speech, but he must have read a "Yes," in the violet eyes raised to his.

"Lora, little sweet!" He was whispering love words. His arms were around her. The strange, delicious hunger that he had awakened within her was satisfied as his lips found hers.

THE first call bell from the wings startled them back to reality.

"I can't believe it." Chuck held her off at arm's length. "Do you honestly love me, and want to troupe the rotten three-a-day circuits with me?"

"Where you go, I'll go." Unconsciously Lora was using almost the same words that in Biblical times another woman had used, in the story of Ruth and Naomi.

"Well, I've got something better than a vaudeville tour to offer you." Chuck laughed boyishly and drew a yellow telegram from his pocket. "I didn't want to show this to you before. I thought it wouldn't be any use to get you all upset about what-might-have-been if you were going to marry that Wells fellow."

Lora took the telegram in bewilderment.

Scout says your new partner and your act is a wow. Can use you in new musical show. Come back and start rehearsals immediately. Will arrange cancellation of your present bookings.

It was signed, "Klawlanger."

"Don't you understand, dear?" Chuck grinned at her amazement. "Klawlanger is one of the biggest producers in New York. One of his scouts has seen us and given us a rave, so he's going to put us in his new musical show. You'll be my partner, sweet, not on the small time, not on the three-a-day, but on the Big Time—on Broadway, darling! Our names will be in the 'lights.' We'll have money, fame—"

"And love!" Lora whispered radiantly.

"And love!" He snatched a quick kiss, just as the bell sounded its second warning.

The Clown's Sweetheart

Love offered twice—but one love was a pink paper rose, and one a living thing, red as heart's blood

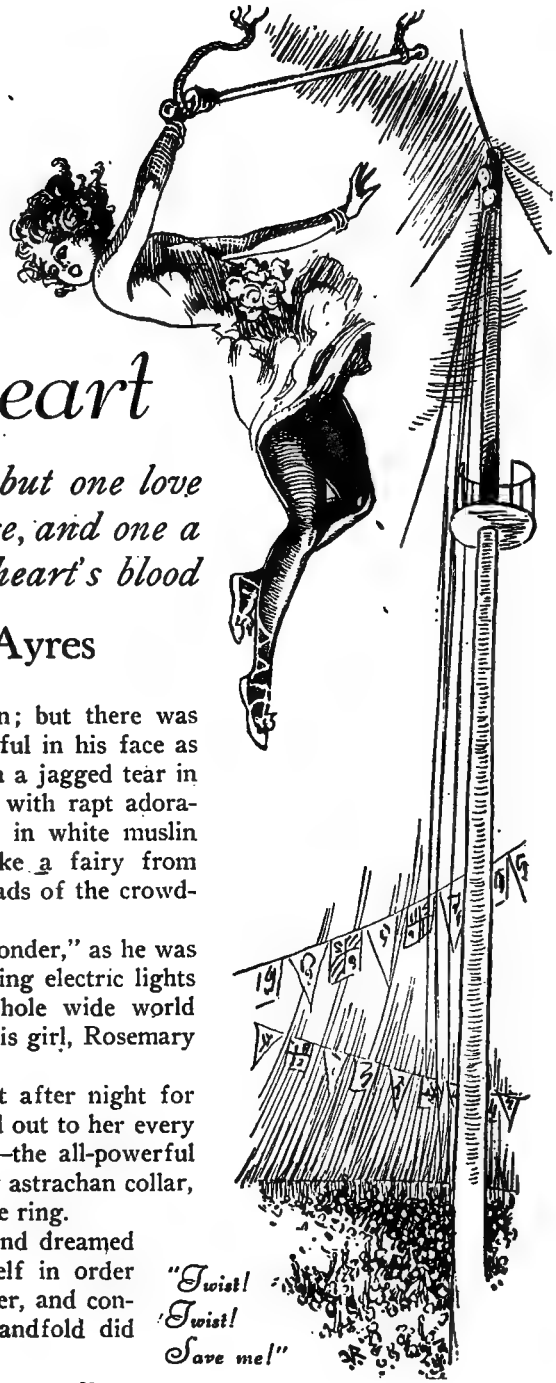
By Ruby M. Ayres

HE was an ugly little man; but there was something almost beautiful in his face as he stood peering through a jagged tear in the canvas tent, his eyes fixed with rapt adoration on the dainty little figure in white muslin and pink roses that swung like a fairy from trapeze to trapeze above the heads of the crowded house.

To Twist—the "Boneless Wonder," as he was starred outside beneath the flaring electric lights—there was nobody in the whole wide world half so clever or beautiful as this girl, Rosemary Raeburn.

Yet she risked her life night after night for the sake of the paltry wage paid out to her every Saturday by the circus owner—the all-powerful man in the coat with the shabby astrachan collar, who stood now at the side of the ring.

Twist lived for her by day and dreamed of her by night—stinted himself in order to buy flowers and candy for her, and considered himself repaid a thousandfold did she but smile upon him.



"Twist! Twist! Save me!"

It had been raining, and the air was chill and damp. The little man shivered in his tights as he stood with his thin, eager face pressed close to the tear in the canvas, anxious to miss no movement of the small, lissom form high up in the glare of the lights.

As Rosemary swung herself from bar to bar, Twist's heart leaped and contracted with fear for her; and yet he gloried in her daring. He loved to hear her confident "One — two— three" before she launched herself across the space between the two trapezes.

"One—two—three—"

Then she let go, and was across, laughing, a little breathlessly, as she perched herself safely on the swinging bar, and pelted the audience with the pink paper roses from her dress.

Twist made those roses for her every day—fashioned them with loving fingers—and shaped beautiful, unfulfilled dreams into each curly petal.

He liked to watch them tumble down night after night among an enthusiastic audience; he liked to see the eager way they scrambled and clamored for her favors.

He pressed closer now to the torn canvas to watch, and then—suddenly —his heart gave a queer little thud.

She had only thrown *one* rose tonight—the big, full-blown rose she had worn in her corsage—the one he had kissed before he gave it to her—only *one!*

She had aimed it deliberately at the ringside boxes, where the wealthier patrons were sitting.

TWIST wriggled his head round in order to see better. He had never known Rosemary to do such a thing before, and his heart beat fast as he watched the big paper rose tumbling slowly over and over in the hot air of the tent—nearer and nearer to the ground.

And then—then—the tall figure of a man rose up from one of the seats and caught it triumphantly. He responded with a graceful wave of the hand, pressed the rose to his lips a second, then placed it in his buttonhole.

There was a little laugh from the crowd, but it was drowned almost instantly by the blare of the band striking up a gay tune to announce the arrival of the next performer.

Twist turned away from the tear in the canvas, and stood for a moment shivering in the chill air.

Rosemary would be coming out now —he knew that; she would be looking impatiently about for him to help her on with her cloak before she ran across the field to her dressing room.

But something seemed to chain his feet, and not until he had seen her slight form dart across the space between the tents did he move slowly—slowly away.

There was only one more "turn" before his, and then he would see who the tall man was who had risen up from his seat and caught so triumphantly the pink rose.

But when the Boneless Wonder walked into the ring on his hands, with his feet curled about his neck, the seat at the end of the first row draped with flags was empty, and a tall man, with a flushed, eager face, was pushing his way out across the crowded field in the direction of the dressing tent.

TWIST shaped off the last petal of a paper rose, and let it fall listlessly to the ground at his feet, in the hot morning sunshine.

There were no kisses, no beautiful

dreams woven into it—nothing but heartache and jealousy—bitter, gnawing jealousy.

The air was heavy and sultry, as if a summer storm were gathering behind the great, fleecy clouds. A little way off — in one of the caravans — a girl was singing a little, foolish song about love and sunshine and butterflies.

A few moments before she had stood in the sunshine beside Twist and laughed at his moody face.

Twist had made her no answer. He had just looked at her, as if to read her very heart and soul.

Then suddenly he had asked her about the tall man who sat in the seat at the end of the first row.

It was a week since the pink rose had fallen slowly but surely into the man's confident, triumphant hands—a whole week—and the circus had moved on to other towns.

But every night the tall man sat in the seat at the end of the first row—and every night a smart racing car put up at an inn not very far from the spot where the tent was pitched.

Twist knew the sound of that car as well as he knew every note and cadence of the voice of the girl now singing a little way off in the caravan.

"How should I know who he is?" Rosemary had answered, pouting. "He must like the circus very, very much if he comes every night as you say he does. Perhaps," she added teasingly; "perhaps it is *you*—whom he comes to see!"

The light mockery of her voice had fanned his smoldering jealousy to fury—and he had sprung up, catching her wrist in a grasp that hurt.

"It is *you!*" he said. "And you know it—it is *you!*"

She had whitened then, tearing herself from him in anger—but a moment later she had come back to where he sat, with her paper roses all about him—and laid her small hand lightly on his shoulder.

"Are you cross with me, Twist?" she had asked; and for answer Twist had turned his head and passionately kissed the small fingers so near his lips.

She had laughed then, and danced away again quite happily; but the old, fierce jealousy had come back stronger than before, now that she was no longer by his side. His heart felt as if it were on fire.

He looked down at the pink roses at his feet, and he saw them red—*red like blood from a man's heart!*

He rose to his feet, his teeth set in his lower lip, his strong, supple hands clenched.

As he moved, something small and white fell to the ground from his coat—something that had been caught in a fold as he sat bending over his work. It was a paper with writing on it—a paper creased and folded, as if it had been carried about for long in a man's coat or a woman's dress.

Twist was no scholar—it was with great difficulty that he scrawled his mother's name and address on the post cards he sometimes sent her—but suspicion sharpened his slow brain, and he spelled out the written words almost easily—spelled out each one that told him all that before he had guessed but vaguely and dimly.

And the first few words were—"Rosemary, my sweet Rosemary . . ."

THE threatened storm had burst at last in all its fury upon the town. The thunder crashed and the lightning flashed in wild, yellow streaks across the rain-sodden earth, as a man, small and ugly, stole slowly from cover to cover till he reached the

canvas flap that led into the big tent. The afternoon performance had been abandoned; nobody would venture across those muddy, sodden fields. There was not a soul in sight as Twist unfastened one corner of the flap and wriggled himself through.

He let the canvas fall to behind him and stood, panting and white-faced, in the gloom of the empty tent.

He had aged years since that morning when he sat in the sunshine and shaped the paper roses; his face looked drawn and lined, while his hands shook as he clasped them together nervously.

The thunder crashed overhead. A wild flash of forked lightning lit up the gloomy tent and played about the man's pallid face as he stood staring up at the canvas roof overhead, where the empty trapezes hung limply.

His eyes looked cruel and merciless —very different from what they had been an hour ago, when he had pleaded with the girl not to ruin her own career and his happiness.

First she had tried to explain tenderly and sympathetically. Then she had mocked. Then, when he had shown her the letter she had dropped that morning, she had grown furiously angry, and torn it from him, vowing she would never forgive him.

But he had held his ground—held it until her continued refusal had well-nigh driven him mad.

"I would sooner know you *dead* than have your life ruined by that—that circus follower!" he had spluttered maliciously.

"Donald Chandler is no circus follower!" she had told him proudly. "His father owns the big automobile works, and Donald is—a gentleman. His love is fine and precious beyond dreams . . ." Her voice had died away musingly.

There was a sneer on the little man's face as his eyes gleamed dangerously. "And you love him? I am only a clown—heh? Some day—since you will not be warned—you may turn to me—for help—but I will not respond! Some day—"

And for answer she had tossed into his face the pink paper roses that bore his dreams!

"They are only paper," her voice had hurled at him; "to-night I shall wear *real* roses—red, beautiful, scented roses—roses for love!"

He could still feel the light sting of the paper flowers in his face. Like fire they seemed to have burned their cruel way into his flesh.

It had hurt at first—it had felt as if she had laid a rough hand on his quivering, naked heart—but now he no longer cared; he remembered it only to add fuel to the fire of his unquenchable hatred and longing for revenge!

Another shivering flash of fiery lightning clove its was across the tent, revealing the man's small, muscular form stealing like a thief round the back of the rows of empty seats to the rope ladder which hung from the roof and reached up to the higher of the trapezes.

It creaked and swayed under his weight, but he climbed on doggedly, and now another flash of lightning glinted on a knife which he carried between his teeth.

He gained the trapeze; with one hand still clinging fast to the rope ladder he reached out and drew the motionless thing toward him. He freed his right hand and took the knife from his mouth.

A roaring, crashing peal of thunder seemed to shake the very earth, and when it cleared away the silence was unbroken save for a faint rasping, saw-

ing sound high up against the canvas roof, a sound like the cutting through of a rope.

Presently that, too, ceased.

A STORM of applause greeted the little figure in the white muslin frock as it ran daintily into the ring—a storm of applause that had not died away as she swung herself lightly onto the lower trapeze, where she sat for a moment, like a bird on a bough, smiling down at the sea of upturned faces.

There were red roses in her white frock and in her hair to-night—red, heavily-scented roses—that looked like blood to the eyes of a small, ugly man who crouched outside the tent in the hot, starlit night—his white face pressed to a tear in the dirty canvas.

At the end of the first row of boxes on the opposite side of the tent, Donald Chandler was gazing upward at Rosemary with rapt attention. In his gaze pride and adoration were mingled with anxiety. His heart thumped violently. His very soul seemed to be going out to her. And now—

"One—two—three—"

She had risen to her feet—her arms flung above her head—the trapeze swaying gently with her light weight.

"One—two—three—"

Faster and faster it swung. The blare of the band stopped suddenly. The whole house seemed to be holding its breath as, with a confident laugh, the girl loosed her hold of the bar to which she had dropped, and swung across space to the higher trapeze.

Twist turned abruptly from the tear in the canvas and ran round to the entrance.

He laughed as he ran, and his eyes looked mad. A flaring poster stared at him from a rough hoarding. "Sensational flight of Rosemary Raeburn," and he laughed as he saw it.

Sensational! Aye! That it was. With a sudden horrible pleasure in the thing he had done, he pushed past the knot of loiterers at the entrance and ran into the ring, just as a wild, piercing scream rent the breathless silence!

One rope of the trapeze had given already, and the other, which had not been cut through so deeply, was straining and sagging beneath the weight of the girl who hung—terror-stricken and deathly—in the glare of the spotlight.

For a moment the audience did not realize what had happened, and then a cry of horror went up.

Twist, standing motionless in the ring, saw men running, and women fainting. He heard a shout of despair from Donald Chandler, who had left his seat hurriedly and was running toward the spot above which the girl was hanging.

Mad exultation filled Twist's heart.

"Dead! Dead! I would rather see her dead," he muttered, shaking.

And the rope above sagged a little more. Another second—

The manager shouted to the agonized girl:

"Hold on! They're fetching the net. For Heaven's sake, hold on!"

Her piteous eyes looked down at the sea of white faces beneath, as if imploring help, looked and met the upturned, ghastly face of Twist.

She screamed his name through the horrible silence—

"Twist! Twist! Save me! Save me!"

AT her cry the Boneless Wonder gave a great start as if suddenly roused from a spell that had been holding him prisoner. Life and warmth flowed again into his set face.

She had cried to him—to *him!*

Not to Donald Chandler, but to him, Twist—the man she had mocked!

With a bound he crossed the ring, pushing aside Chandler and the other men standing there, till he was almost directly beneath the swaying, helpless figure.

He threw back his head and held out his arms to her.

"Jump!" he shouted. "Jump!"

There was such quiet command in the voice of the ugly little man, such confidence, that nobody made a step forward—nobody moved to interfere with the act that seemed certain death to both.

It was a dreadful moment—the ghastly silence filling the tent seemed like some tangible thing that had seized and was holding the white-faced crowd in its merciless grasp. A child began to whimper feebly.

The little sound seemed to rouse Rosemary, high up in the glare of light, from the terrified lethargy into which she had fallen.

She screamed again shrilly. There was a horrible rending sound—a second, then the white, helpless figure let go its hold of the breaking trapeze, and fell like a shaft of light through the awful space beneath.

A DOCTOR who had pushed his way through the horrified crowd to kneel down beside Twist, rose slowly to his feet.

"I can do nothing," he said.

He looked down pityingly on the ugly little man. Twist was lying with closed eyes—his head in the white muslin lap of the girl whose life he had saved.

Donald Chandler, white-faced and tense, had already phoned for an ambulance, and was now doing what he could to make the dying man comfortable.

Rosemary's eyes were fixed in agony on the face of the Boneless Wonder.

"Twist! Twist!" she was whispering tenderly, appealingly.

His heavy lids lifted, his glazing eyes turned toward her. A weak smile flitted across his lips.

"It was me," he gasped. "I did it—because—I couldn't bear—to give you up. I was insane—with jealousy. And now I'm going—to the Big Top—'way out yonder, and I want—I want you—forgive me—before I go!"

"I do forgive you, Twist!" the girl cried, tears streaming from her eyes "I do forgive you!"

She clasped the hands of the ugly little man who, out of his great love for her, had committed a great wrong—but had atoned for it magnificently with his life.

"I am glad," the faint voice murmured. "My love was only—a pink paper rose—*he* will make you happy—with red roses—for love—"

The ambulance arrived then, and Donald assisted gently in lifting the Boneless Wonder onto a stretcher.

But his soul had already answered the call of "the Big Top—'way out yonder."

And that is why, every year, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Chandler revisit a certain country town, stroll through the little cemetery there, and pause before a well-kept grave, upon which they lay an offering of beautiful, fragrant roses, red as heart's blood.

She reached him just as he landed. He fell forward, lay still

Red Head

Carrots! Bricktop! That was Eulalia. And then the little god of love played her a very whimsical trick indeed!

By Georgia Maxwell

LUCY'S husband, puffing large, fat puffs from his large, fat cigar, remonstrated feebly, "But we're going on this Mediterranean trip for a rest! Rest and your sister Eulalia!" He chuckled. "That red-headed little devil! She's as restful as a Florida hurricane!"

She didn't look in the least like a hurricane as she sat in her steamer chair on the port side, the afternoon of the day they sailed. Yet there was nothing of relaxation in her slender body. Her soft, gray rug was tucked in carefully on one side, but was loose on the other, as if it might be ready for an impatient, gloved hand to dash it off any instant. Her eyes, deeper blue than the ocean, as it danced now under a sunny sky, were fastened on the horizon. Not in contemplation of it. They were not seeing the horizon, but were themselves dancing as if they saw, out there, things vividly amusing.

Her head was bare, and every red hair seemed as alive, as intent, as interested as her eyes. Her hair was not auburn, it couldn't be described as having in it vagrant glints of gold: it was aggressively, defiantly red, and it curled so hard it almost doubled back.

With all the vigor of her intense nature, Eulalia abominated her hair. It was the one thing, the only thing, in

an otherwise gorgeous world, that all but spoiled being alive. She wished she were a man, so she might have the comfort of perhaps becoming bald.

Of course she might be prematurely gray. There was that. Making no compromises with life, she couldn't dye it. To show how contemptuous of it she was, she seldom wore a hat.

But the fact that it was red bit into the deepest fiber of her soul. She hated the very word "red," and carried her passionate aversion even to red flowers. Any man who sent Eulalia yellow jonquils, white lilacs, pale roses, or purple orchids, had a good start, though none ever finished. Red roses were fatal, and one such mistake could never be wiped out, not if the donor sent her orchids all the rest of his life.

She was amused now, and stimulated by the open interest of the young man who sprawled comfortably under his rug in the next deck chair. He had been looking at her a long time, while his white hands held a book he had not looked at.

With a man in the offing, Eulalia's star rose.

She had noticed this man's white face as the steward tucked him in.

"Easy there." The young man's voice had been pleasant, but had held a wince. "Don't touch the old bean."

"No, sir." The respectful steward carefully put a small pillow behind his head, and Eulalia had noted, with quick sympathy, that the French béret pulled down low over one ear in a rakish fashion, did not quite cover white bandages.

SHE stood his intent gaze now as long as she could without laughing; then she turned quickly, and met his eyes squarely.

"I'm—I'm sorry." He had an engaging grin, and didn't look sorry. "I like your hair. Do you mind my telling you so?"

"Don't mind your telling me, but I mind your liking it." With a quick hand she smoothed it, but instantly it reasserted itself, in an insolent, flame-red aureole. "If you like it, you're probably color blind," she added kindly. "My uncle is. It looks brown to him. Dark brown, he says, the very same color his house is. Quite hideous, but at least ordinary looking!"

He chuckled.

"I like red-haired people—always. They are natural. Have you got a name?"

He reached in his pocket for the ship's list, opened it. "Here's mine." He pointed to "Redman, Duncan L."

"*Red*man! Oh, that's just too bad! And I was congratulating myself on having you next me, instead of one of those finicky old maids going over for the first time. But—*Red*man!"

"What's the matter with that? Duncan L. Redman is a darned good name!"

"I suppose the fellows call you 'Red'?"

"Sure. I *like* being called 'Red.'"

He liked it!

And she had thought him such a nice fellow, with his easy smile, his eager, amber eyes, his strikingly black lashes and eyebrows.

"I loathe the very word 'red.' When I was six a little boy in school called me 'Reddy' just once. In the resulting combat he lost two front teeth. Second teeth. I remember that 'primitive' and 'tigress' were two of the terms his mother used in describing me."

He shouted. "Just the same, I continue to like the name 'Red.'"

"Scotch? A stubborn Scotchman?"

She still gazed disapprovingly down at his name.

"Pig-headed," he agreed. "And your name is—"

"Under D. Farther. There, in the middle. Two more. There."

"'Dillon, Eulalia.'"

"Oh, but I don't pronounce it that way. It's You-la-lee, accent on the lee."

"Eulalia Dillon," he experimented with it. "Now if we can find a few common friends, let's skip the weather, the ship, the passengers. Let's see. I was Wisconsin—1928. Engineering." He named his fraternity. "With Biggs, Scott and Riggles, New York. The minute I get back from this trip I'm being sent down to Chili on my first big job."

"And I was Smith, 1929, and—"

"Did you know Kay Greenfield?"

"Roomed across the hall from me. Visited me Easter vacation. Is going to be married to Slim Dunnfelder next fall. I'm to be maid-of-honor."

"She's my cousin. I'm being best man."

"How do you do, Mr. Redman?" She leaned over gravely to shake hands with her "pleased-to-meet-you" smile. "Oh, what is it?"

He had gone white, and closed his eyes.

"It's just that I can't remember not to jerk my head." His lips compressed with pain. "It's all right, except when it—scrapes. I got hurt in a fall on some barbed wire."

"A fall?" How did any one get such a wound from a fall?

"My plane balked, and I came down with a parachute," he explained. "I didn't manage my legs right, or I'd have avoided that fence."

"Oh." Eulalia's heart pounded as she stared at him. She bit her lip hard, but it was no use. Her head dropped back against her chair, as over her rushed that terrifying feeling of falling. Her head swam as she saw, in imagination, a plane, high—high—begin to totter in mid sky!

Hadn't she been there! It would lurch; then, out on a wing, would appear a speck! The speck would leap out into space—would fall—fall! Her heart pounded breathlessly. The parachute would open!

"You're safe enough," he was saying, "if you've a parachute. Unless your plane catches fire, of course, and you are trapped."

"Don't! Did the dressing gong sound—yes, it must have." She nodded back at him as she dashed off her rug and almost ran to her cabin.

"YOU *are* such a idiot!" She glared at her white face, then turned such a gush of water into her tub that it sprayed out over her. "Serves you right! You—who can ride the wildest horse your Uncle Ted owns, who can—let's see—well, who can drive any old car at all, without chains, on a newly worked convict road in a pouring rain. Who can, and does, sail the trimmest little boat alone in the stiffest breeze Cape Cod's got."

She stripped off her stockings angrily.

"And who handled a second-story man that time in the night—and hog-tied him, too. You—turn white and feel as if your insides were all scraped clean out when a man mentions a plane! It's almost a year since your old plane accident, and no one was killed in that!"

Eulalia proved her contempt by splashing her slim, white body hard with icy salt water. When, tingling and fresh, she slipped a sea-green lace

dress over her head, her eyes were still cold with contempt.

She confronted herself in the mirror.

"You will curl, will you?" She addressed the crisp hair she was brushing with quick, hard strokes. "I'd like to shave you off! Some day I will!" She smiled placatingly at herself over her shoulder. It really wasn't so bad, now that she had had it cut quite close.

As she followed Lucy and Sam in to dinner, she carried her beautifully shaped small head defiantly, conscious of the eyes fastened on her. She could imagine them saying, "Look quick! My God, did you ever *see* such a redhead? My dear, it's positively *pink!*"

When, as a matter of fact, what they *were* saying was, "That girl is the stunningest thing I ever saw. D'you know that couple she's with? Get me an introduction to her, will you? That's a good egg."

LATER, when they went to dance, it appeared that Sam had suddenly many acquaintances that he scarcely remembered meeting. But through the circle about Eulalia pushed a tall man, his evening clothes incongruously topped with a béret, worn aggressively, and showing now only a small strip of bandage.

"Our dance."

Lucy looked her surprise, as Eulalia, with a laugh, went into his arms.

"That's called shanghaiing, isn't it?" She tipped her head back to look up into the laughing eyes.

His arm tightened. "Don't talk," he ordered.

Eulalia had danced with boys, with men, since she was nine. Each had been merely a partner. This was different.

It was, she thought, as if they two were alone on the floor. There was that about him that banished every one else.

As the music crashed to a stop, he did not release her, but waited for the encore. She looked up to see his face white, beads of perspiration on his forehead.

"Oh, you *shouldn't!*" and she drew away. "You shouldn't be dancing at all! I never thought of your poor head!"

"I don't dance with my head," he objected, and held out his arms as the music began again.

"We'll dance only to that door. Not another step. You should not dance, I know!"

"I'll stop if you'll go up on deck with me. Otherwise, I'll dance every dance, and probably check out."

"I don't know why I let you intimidate me like this." She caught up her wrap and neatly eluded Lucy, who was coming their way.

"I'll tell you why." They were climbing the steps now. "Shall we go on up to the boat deck?"

IN the darkness Eulalia smiled to herself. The boat deck stage never came so soon. One led up to it. One reserved that for the last nights! This was like announcing you had four honors in one hand, fifth in partner's, before you picked up your cards!

She slipped a hand through his welcoming arm, and they went on the length of the deck, stopping at the bow, at the rail between two lifeboats.

"I suppose," he began, "that you've been kissed behind every lifeboat on most of the liners."

"Oh, I shouldn't say every lifeboat!"

"So you have been?"

"Well, I'm twenty-three, and—

times have changed since grandmother was a girl."

He considered this.

"Look here, Eulalia, I'm skipping the preliminaries. This lifeboat is," he looked to see, "is number three. It's mine. If you choose to flirt on this trip, don't bring him here. This one is taken. It's ours!"

"Well, upon my word!" She tried to withdraw her hand from his arm, but the arm tightened, and his hand closed over hers.

"Yes, I work fast. I always knew I would when I met the girl. I know you as if I had been with you every day since the stars were born. You don't know me."

"No, I certainly don't!"

"So I'll spend the daylight hours telling you about me, the evening hours making love to you, the hours in between, thinking about you. And now shall we go down? First, I'm going to kiss you!"

"You're not!"

He did.

It wasn't as if her quickly averted face and strong young arms were a challenge at all. It was only that having decided to take a thing, Duncan Redman went ahead and took it, and a girl's furious blue eyes and unyielding body were no more a deterrent than a bunch of wire grass in his stride through a forest path.

And he was as unskillful at this business as he was determined. It was only his evident unfamiliarity with his rôle that saved the situation from being theatrical.

EULALIA had been kissed. But—never like this! As part of her perfect technique she resisted, of course. Let a man get away with anything like this? Caveman stuff was what girls dream of before they fall asleep. The reason that the sheik books and movies are sold out.

As he let her go, she caught her breath.

"In that fall, something quite serious happened to your head, didn't it?" In the darkness her voice cut like a knife. "Has any one thought of putting you under observation?"

"No, nothing serious has happened to my head—the way you mean." He was grave about this. "I could have played according to Hoyle, but I'm not that way. Frankly, I couldn't stand it to see you playing around with a dozen other men. By morning there will be more than a dozen on your list."

"But surely you don't think—"

"No, I don't. You'll play around with them anyway. But—I've made a definite place at once—a place not one of them can usurp now! You may hate me, but at least I stand out from the rest!"

"Yes," she admitted. "Although your béret with your evening clothes would have served to do that. It's very distinctive—and different."

"I've been honest with you, Eulalia. I'm mad about you! Will you stay up here—please stay! Just a little while!"

But she was halfway across the deck. "I'll go down. It's cold in this breeze," she called back. She was shaking, but not because of the breeze, and she wouldn't have had him know it for worlds.

As they reached the dance hall again, she knew that Duncan would not ask her to dance. She shrugged her wrap from her shoulders, slipped into his arms, and onto the floor almost with one motion.

"You are the most beautiful dancer! You would be! It's good of you not to punish me by—"

"There are other ways." She glanced quickly up at him, but the eyes she had expected to see brimming with amusement were big, dark, very serious as they met hers, the mouth unsmiling.

"Yes, I suppose so. But I'm glad I had the nerve! My head is bloody but unbowed, darling."

"You should take better care of it." She was severe now. "Your doctor probably ordered you to bed every night at nine. Did he?"

"He did. But he didn't know about you!"

They stopped beside Lucy and Sam. Eulalia presented Duncan, and could have slain her sister happily, when Lucy was enthusiastic.

"Mr. Redman is just leaving us," Eulalia cut in, when she saw he was about to ask Lucy to dance. "He isn't dancing any more. He's been hurt, and his doctor—"

He flushed, and left almost at once.

"My dear!" Lucy gasped. "Did you know he is the nephew of *the* H. Horace Lortimer? You are the luckiest girl!"

"I don't care if he's H. Horace himself!"

"He's at the captain's table! Where did you meet him?"

"He has the deck chair next mine. Don't get all hot and bothered, Lucy. He's awfully—well, no, not ordinary, but a bit aggressive!"

Eulalia smiled at her adjective, as she was whirled off in the arms of one of the men Sam presented.

During the long evening of having to divide her dances, she decided that there were several likely young men on board. It looked like a promising trip!

When she had put out her light, she knelt on her bed to look out of the porthole. The dark water, surging against the ship's sides, retreated with a sullen hiss. The steady throb of the engines was like a mighty heartbeat.

With a sigh of content she stretched out between cool sheets, and gave her body to the roll of the ship.

Lots of nice men aboard—yet one stood out from the others! She would not let him stand out! But, as her mind fogged and stilled, there was the picture of a béret with an evening suit—the pressure of insistent arms—a man's warm, excited breath on her cheek—

COMING up on deck after breakfast, she ran bang into Duncan Redman.

"Walking awhile?"

His glance was quizzical, ready for a rebuff.

"Walking."

She linked her arm into his, and together they tramped round and round.

The wind was brisk this morning, the sea white-frilled, the boat pitching heavily. The girl's blue suit, with its flying blue scarf with orange ends, revealed every lithe line, as Eulalia leaned back hard against the wind.

"Great, isn't it?" She loved the way the wind caught at her hair. "How's your head?"

His keen glance into her eyes set them for the moment apart, not one of many sweeping round and round the deck, but alone by lifeboat number three, in the dark night.

"Unbowed! Shall we sit down and be tucked up, while I tell you about—everything? Please, Eulalia!"

She ignored the wistful note in his voice. "I'm playing deck tennis with some one. I think it's with that tall man over there with the nice smile. Yes, he's coming over."

"You can't play tennis in this wind."

She could play tennis in any wind. It was difficult, but fun, to keep your feet, with the ship pitching like this.

IN the days that followed, even though she crossed several men off her list, enough remained to divide into the sixteen or eighteen hours of Eulalia's day. Lots of nice girls, too!

Perhaps it wasn't cricket to do all day the very things Duncan, because of his head, could not do. When she would drop down into her deck chair for a few minutes, some other man would come sit on the foot of her chair to join her in a cigarette, or perhaps two of them would come along and pull her up, to rush her away for a swim, to play tennis, to do a dozen things Duncan could not do.

She knew she was just stalling along, that the day of reckoning would come.

If the sea was reasonably smooth he danced once or twice every night. Each time there was the same compelling appeal, though Eulalia hotly denied it, even to herself.

"Why won't you give me a chance?" They were dancing now, as the ship neared Naples. "If I hadn't been handicapped by the old bean, I'd have made you!"

Eulalia was demure. She could afford to be generous, as they would be landing in the morning. "Caveman stuff is so—young, don't you think?"

"Old as Adam. Why doesn't your sister like me?"

"Doesn't she?"

Eulalia knew she didn't. The two sisters had had words about him just before dinner.

"He hasn't a cent!" Lucy's hands had been eloquent. "He told me himself that he worked his way through college, and that, though his uncle is giving him this trip to recuperate, he's willed all his money to two orphanages! Orphanages! So your Duncan Redman has ab-so-lute-ly nothing but his degree, and—youth. He told me so himself!"

"If you've an engineering degree, a job in Chili, as he has and — youth, you've got all there is in life!" Sam had broken in unexpectedly, and Eulalia, who had always felt a little sorry for funny old important Sam, felt a little more sorry for him now.

In her shimmering silver dress she looked gorgeously angry as she answered hotly, "And he's *not* my Duncan Redman!"

NOW, as they floated to the music of the orchestra on this last night, she was not so sure he was not her Duncan Redman.

Later, behind their number three lifeboat, she was certain he was. When he was tender, pleading, he was irresistible. And he had the blessed, blundering technique of the lover who is inexperienced.

Just as a dissipated old rag of a moon was dropping into the ocean, they came down from their boat deck, engaged!

It was just one of those things that had been planned since the day the world was made! One woman in all the world intended for one man? Certainly. Eulalia for Duncan!

"I'll marry you on just one condition." She had tipped back her head to look up into his serious eyes, dark now with emotion.

He kissed her again. "And that is—"

"That you'll not fly again—ever!"

"Why—why not, sweetheart? We'll

both fly, together. What's the matter?"

She was shaking.

"My knees go weak and funny, even to think of it! I—can't—even talk about it! It's just something I can't control! I can't watch a plane! I go cold when I hear one! I know it's some kind of a phobia, but it's part of me, and you'll be marrying the phobia if you marry me!"

"But that's ridiculous!"

"Very well." She drew away, but in a second he had her back in his arms.

And it hadn't seemed such a sacrifice, even though he had sailed for this port just because his college roommate, Copper Williams, was in charge of a Neapolitan air port.

Knowing how disappointing it would be to Duncan to visit Copper yet not fly, Eulalia suggested that Duncan come on over to Capri with them for a week or two instead.

At least that was how she explained her invitation to herself. But deep in her heart she knew that she must hold this shining ball of happiness tight in her hands, must not let the lovely, fragile thing go for a second, lest it disappear.

She stared, rigid with horror. "Duncan!" she shrieked

She had in her, deep rooted, enough of the Puritan to feel that any such glowing joy as this could not last, could not, indeed, be wholly right! What had she ever done to deserve such pulsing joy?

THEY missed the morning express boat from Naples to Capri, and had to take the afternoon local. The bay had been calm, serene in its blue consciousness of beauty, but the farther they got from Naples the rougher it became.

Eulalia and Duncan stood at the rail, watching, when they stopped at Amalfi. As the passengers were put off in the tiny boats that rowed out,

scrambling for their patronage, Eulalia found herself clutching Duncan and gasping, as each made the leap from the big boat to the tiny one.

The sun was quite down as they neared Capri, the waves, roaring by, dark and sinister-looking, edged with white.

"There will be a dock at Capri, won't there?" Lucy asked.

"Wasn't last time I was here." Duncan smiled wickedly at Eulalia, as the little boats, looking as tiny and much more futile than peanut shells, bobbed out toward them on the angry sea.

Down went their boat ladder, while the boatman of the first little craft, barefooted and scraggy, stood up in his boat far below, and held tight to the ladder. With every mountainous wave his small boat rushed up far past the steps, then sank sickeningly away out of sight.

"I can't do it," Lucy cried.

"You'll h-have to." Sam was stuttering with apprehension.

"Grit your teeth, Lucy," Eulalia laughed. "Just say to yourself, 'Pooh! I'm an American!'"

Through her banter, Eulalia was regarding Lucy with deep, uncomprehending pity. Lucy's husband was with her, and still Lucy was afraid!

Eulalia turned, looked up at Duncan's clean profile. Afraid of anything, when with the man one loved? It was fantastic even to think of being afraid of—of anything—when with Duncan!

The boatman took Eulalia's outstretched hand, and, as the little boat came even with the bottom step, gave her a deft little tug. In she popped, sitting down beside Lucy, who, with eyes closed, was softly moaning. With Duncan in, they put off, the boat bucking like a bronco, then settling down to the even, sickening swing of a camel, Eulalia thought, as they got inside the breakwater.

THE hotel porter took them in charge. He had four young women for the baggage, and to Eulalia's horror the girls each hoisted a trunk or two of the enormous suitcases on top of her head and marched off, laughing and talking, up what seemed in the darkness millions of steep steps.

"While we poor weaklings, with nothing on our heads but our hats, or bandages," murmured Eulalia, slipping a hand into Duncan's warmly responsive one, "we get grandly into this funicular, and are raised straight up these craggy old rocks."

"No taxi?" Sam, getting out of the funicular at the top, loudly compared this Capri to any little jerkwater town in his United States. Lucy bewailed her high heels.

Eulalia and Duncan, laughing helplessly as they slipped and slid over the cobblestones, hurried after the porter's lantern, as it went faster and faster in a labyrinth of narrow, dark, walled streets.

"Easy there." Duncan threw a hand out just in time to prevent Eulalia from plunging down a shallow flight of stone steps. "Here we are."

At the end of a flagstone path was the brilliantly lighted hotel. He drew her quickly behind a rose trellis. "Be a darling, Eulalia! Make it—three!"

NEXT morning at nine the two met for a walk. Eulalia, as they left the hotel, breathed deeply of the warm, sweet-scented air.

"I adore it! I could stay forever."

"Alone?"

"Maybe not alone," she conceded. "But I'm so happy, I feel I'll burst."

"And so lovely," he looked at her with narrowed eyes, "that I could swallow you whole. And will," he promised, "as soon as we get out on that mountain path."

"Let's hurry, then!"

She smiled back as she started off ahead down a tiny, walled street, not wide enough for two abreast. Over the high walls on either side peeped flowering almond trees, pushing lacy heads over the stucco wall as if to prove that a hard, gray plaster prison does not prove that there is no loveliness beyond. Or perhaps there was a husky hedge of geraniums on top of the wall, or a spiny cactus.

"Look! Isn't that precious?"

Eulalia stopped before a tiny shrine. Behind a glass case was a Madonna, made of an Elizabethan doll, in her arms a red-cheeked bambino doll.

Duncan slipped an understanding hand into hers. In her heart surged a great tenderness as she saw the look on his face. He was a darling! Most of the men she knew would have laughed at her funny little shrine; but Duncan saw all the childlike faith of these simple people in it as she did.

Then out onto the little path right along the sea, but high above it—a little path so steep in places that it had huge, deep steps. There was an occasional villa or castle with beautiful gardens inside big grilled gates, but mostly the little path was wild and rocky and lonely, with tiny flowers growing wherever they could find a toe-hold.

With the soft breeze from the sea lifting the tiny curls on her forehead, such a stab of sheer happiness pierced Eulalia that she gasped. Her breath came thin and sharp with the ecstasy of it all, as if she were taking ether.

"Duncan! Look at that old woman coming!"

She passed, a huge sack of potatoes poised on her head, her feet shuffling along in wooden-soled, heelless shoes.

"Poor darling!" Eulalia was filled with pity. "Couldn't we buy her a donkey?" Pity for all old, unloved women rushed over her.

"Not for love or money, darling. The hotel porter tells me that in the affluent days before the war there were ten donkeys on the island. Two now, used only for tourists. I could offer to carry her potatoes on my head, if you like. The hotel doctor took off my bandages this morning."

"Why didn't you *tell* me? Take off your cap this second!"

SHE stared, rigid with horror.

"Duncan!" she shrieked.

"What? I know I look like the devil, with the back shaved, but—"

"*Red!* Red as mine!"

"Sure it's red. That's why I loved you from the word go. We're two of a kind."

"You dared to make me ridiculous! To ask me to *marry* you!" She was almost sobbing now.

"But darling—you knew that—"

"*Knew?* Do you think I'd *marry* a man with—*red hair?* When all my life people have stared at me—"

"Because you're beautiful!"

"Because my hair is brick red! Do you think I'll make myself a laughing stock—*two* of us!"

She laughed hysterically.

"I never dreamed you didn't know it! I told you I was called 'Red' in school."

"But because of your name! That was bad enough. What would our children look like?" She was white with rage.

"You—I hope!"

"You dared to do this to me! Trick me into—"

"I didn't trick you!" Duncan was furious now. "I thought that you—well, I just never thought of it at all!"

"I never want to see you again!"

After a deadly silence, "Do you mean that?"

"I mean that!"

Unexpectedly he took her in his arms. Her resistance this time was as ineffectual as it had been that first night on the ship.

"You know we belong to each other! You know it! As if a silly matter like red hair could make a difference! It's nothing! Less than nothing! All that matters is that you're mine! I'm yours!"

"I hate you!"

With one strong hand under her chin, he forced her to look straight into his eyes. "Do you mean that? If you can look at me—so—and say it again—"

"I hate you. I never want to see you again!"

Without another word he released her, turned, and walked swiftly back the way they had come.

Eulalia stood staring after him. The tall, slender figure, with his red hair blowing defiantly in the wind, passed around a turn, was gone!

Half sobbing, Eulalia sank down by the path. To make her ridiculous! One red head was bad enough. Two! "Mr. and Mrs. Redman!" Both red-headed!

WHEN she returned to the hotel, hours later, Duncan had gone. Had left on the mail boat, Lucy said with satisfaction, watching her sister closely. No, there was no note, no word of any kind.

After lunch a wire. "Will drop in on you about four this afternoon. Duncan."

She inquired about boats. The sea was too rough even for the mail boat this evening. There would be none till to-morrow. Maybe he would hire a boat to bring him!

He needn't come back! She had said everything she had to say. Passing her mirror, she stopped.

"Two heads like that! *Two!* It's so awful, it's—almost—funny!" She laughed, but the laughter turned to sobs. "Two, then three, maybe even five! All in one family! One house! Why shouldn't his hair have matched his lashes, his eyebrows? They are coal black!"

She threw herself face down on the bed, beating her clenched fists against the pillow in a passion of weeping.

But not for long.

"Be here if he comes? Never!" She rushed out of the hotel, took again the little path they had taken this morning. How different! The sun shone as brilliantly, but nothing seemed to sparkle. The sea, running high, frothed with white, looked sinister, unfriendly.

She shivered.

As they had turned this corner this morning, Duncan had said she looked like a sea nymph in her white wool suit, her green hat, and the green scarf that had whipped out and caught him round his neck. Here on this great rock they had sat down to rest. He had taken her hand in both his, and his eyes had darkened as they always did when he touched her.

Would — things — always bite into her heart like this? Would the sight of everything always be saturated with Duncan? The sun—moonlight on water—everything that mattered?

Before she realized what caused it, a shudder ran through her. Oh, a plane! There it was—over the ocean! It dipped low, circled round and round. Some one leaned out, waved!

DUNCAN! It was Duncan in the plane! Eulalia's knees gave way. She sank down in the path. Why had he done it? He had promised! "If you'll marry me I'll never—" But she wouldn't marry him!

He couldn't land! Not on stony little Capri. As she watched, breathless, fascinated with horror, she saw a figure on one of the wings! He was going to jump!

Eulalia screamed, closed her eyes. Opened them. He had jumped!

"Oh, dear God, why did you let him? Why did I? His parachute isn't opening! It isn't! Oh, it is!"

He was floating down.

"He'll land in the sea!" Feeling that she was nothing but an empty shell, Eulalia ran. She stumbled, she fell, she scrambled up over rocks, through stubborn underbrush tore her way. Gasping, praying, crying, she ran.

"Don't let him be killed! I want his darling body, just as it is, red hair and all! Oh, Duncan! Duncan!"

She reached him just as he landed. He fell forward, lay still.

SHE dropped beside him. "Duncan!" she moaned. She took his face between her hands.

He opened his eyes, stared at her.

"Duncan! It's Eulalia! You're hurt, darling! It's Eulalia."

"She's nothing to me," he said, looking directly into her eyes. "Less than nothing. I came to tell her so."

"You've hurt your head again!"

"No." He was sitting up now, still a bit dazed. "No, I'm not hurt at all. Quite all right. Army training, you know. To go up as soon as you can after cracking up a plane."

"Duncan! You came back to tell me—"

"Yes. To assure you you were quite right. Lucky we found it out soon enough."

"You don't—love me?" she faltered.

"That's not so damned surprising, is it?"

He was getting to his feet now. He let her scramble up, unassisted.

"And you don't—want me?"

His eyes were cold and hard. They softened as they looked at her white face, her bewildered, agonized eyes. "Yes," he admitted. "I want you. But only on certain conditions."

"Oh!"

The very idea of a man making conditions—to her!

"Yes," he continued, his mouth uncompromising, "I want you — very much. But I'll make no such idiotic promise as not to fly. I'll fly! And you'll fly with me!"

She hesitated, then, as he turned away to the tangle of parachute ropes, she capitulated.

"Yes. With you."

She would never be afraid again—not with Duncan. All the terror of the past and future had been bound up in those first terrifying minutes after Duncan had leaped from the plane's wing. Had culminated as he repudiated her. Had been released forever, when she saw the first faint relenting in his amber eyes, the first lack of tension in his firm lips.

"Oh, Duncan! You know I'll fly with you."

He held her tight to still her shud-

dering sobs, but swiftly, relentlessly, he pressed his advantage. "And you'll marry me to-morrow—red head included?"

"Duncan! As if that mattered!"

AS the hotel orchestra crashed the finish of a dance, they stopped dancing just behind a woman who had turned to shout into old Mrs. Deerman's trumpet.

"Yes, her sister told me they're engaged. Bet she'd never have looked at him if he hadn't had red hair! Just an affectation with her — to be conspicuous!"

Eulalia looked up at Duncan with sober, shining eyes. "Just an affectation with me, darling. To be conspicuous."

"Stop looking at me like that," he muttered close to her ear, "or I won't be responsible, and—"

"Dare you!" she laughed, as she slipped past him, out the open door, into the soft, welcoming night. Duncan was such an enthusiastic darling when he was dared!

For My Love and Me

I FOUND a hill where love was sweet,
One little house without a street.

Two blue cups for my love and me,
And all day long, the song of the sea.

I found a hill above the dunes,
Where a moon blew over the afternoons.

Quaint little house with a loft above,
There in the pines for me and my love.

One low room for books and such—
Love mustn't own—mustn't own too much.

Two other cups without any handles,
Tea and jam, and plenty of candles.

Yet why should a girl want less or more?
And a gypsy world, outside the door?

I found a hill where love was sweet,
Knocked at the door, and scraped my feet.

Two blue cups for my love and me,
And all day long, the song of the sea!

—Queene B. Lister

Mad Marriage

With her free hand she tore at his and screamed "Rod!"

And now on their lonely island Sybil, legal bride of another man, learns that her love is given irrevocably to Rod!

By Marthe Neville

THE STORY THUS FAR

SWEPT into a hasty marriage after an overnight acquaintance, Sybil Copely learns that the man she has married was engaged to Louise, her best friend, whom she has unknowingly betrayed by her impetuous action.

The disillusionment causes her to turn from her groom of a few hours and refuse to be his wife.

For appearances' sake, however, she consents to accompany Louise, her brother Rod and their party on the Caribbean yachting trip already planned. Her infatuation has passed and she learns that she has never had any real feeling for Ted Sherry, her husband. Accordingly the trip is a very unhappy one, with Sybil and Ted frozenly polite to each other, Sybil rooming with Louise, who is bravely trying to conceal her breaking heart from offered sympathy.

Then—a tropical hurricane blows up and Sybil is swept overboard. Rod, the only witness, jumps into the sea after her, supporting her while the yacht vanishes in the distance! Hours afterward, they reach an island and sink exhausted upon the beach.

CHAPTER X

DAYLIGHT dawned with a radiance that was dazzling. The shadowy underbrush resolved itself into a tumultuous array of riotous colors.

Rank weeds struggled under flaming *Madre de Cocao* trees whose crimson blossoms tinged with scarlet the ground around them. Oleander bushes, hibiscus and banana plants clustered under the shelter of heavily laden mangoes and breadfruit trees that towered above bushes of wild roses and clumps of bamboos.

Little feathered songsters twittered a morning carol to the sun. Delicate golden-brown humming birds dipped their stem-like beaks into the honey cups of the colorful blossoms.

Love birds, emerald green—pink—white or gray—rubbed wings together and chattered raucously. Macaws, gorgeous of plumage and arrogant in manner, hopped from branch to branch.

Sybil wakened with a startled cry. She blinked sleepily in the golden sunlight, for the moment uncertain of her bearings and if all that had occurred was not a bad dream, a hideous nightmare.

The fire had died down. Only a few smoldering embers replaced the flames of the night before.

Across from her Rod lay, stretched on the sand, one arm under his dark, wine-colored hair. His face looked pale and drawn, with violet shadows under his eyes, and a pallid line about his mouth. His clothing was torn and stained. One sleeve was gone from his jacket. On his bare arm was a livid, ugly bruise.

Sybil had an overwhelming impulse to kiss that bruise, to cradle that dark tousled head against her breast, and comfort him as a mother would have done—an impulse she crushed back with an effort.

She felt stiff and sore in her joints. Her gown was ruined. Her stockings in tatters, her shoes caked with salt. Softly, so as not to awaken him, she rose and stretched herself.

It was no dream; she had been near death and Rod had saved her. He had leaped into the sea, risking his own life. He disliked her, but he had not hesitated to do what he considered his duty.

THE girl shaded her eyes and stared about. As far as she could see to right and left an endless expanse of vividly blue water with flecks of milky foam advanced swiftly and receded, leaving masses of seaweed and conch shells upon the sand.

Behind her was an impenetrable jungle, a tangle of banyan trees, gnarled roots and gorgeous foliage.

Sybil crept quietly to the water's edge. Bending, she cupped her hands, dipped them into the sea, and bathed her face.

Suddenly she jerked back with a terrified cry. An ugly black fin, and a long sinister body had flashed past her.

A shark! Last night they had struggled to shore in that shark-infested water and had reached land in safety!

Her cry brought Rod to his feet.

"What is it?" he asked sleepily.

"I saw a shark—I'm sorry I wakened you."

"Just as well. This sun would have

given me a splitting headache. Sharks, eh?" His keen eyes studied her. "I had an idea there were sharks here. We were mighty lucky to have escaped them yesterday."

His nonchalance angered the girl. If only he would reproach her, say anything that would give her an opportunity to retort and relieve her nervous tension, she would feel better. But evidently nothing could shake his cool serenity—not even the possible death of the sister he loved.

Abruptly she swung about and returned to the fire.

"I suppose," she said coldly, "we can find something to eat here beside coconuts. They may be filling, but I don't care for them for breakfast."

"Stir up the fire," he answered, "and I'll look about. There are bananas at least, and fish, if we can contrive to catch them."

Sybil watched him spring up the beach, lithe and graceful for all his disreputable garments; saw him push his way through a clump of bamboo and disappear from sight. There was an ache of loneliness in her heart.

LIFE was all wrong. She had taken its skeins in her hands, and twisted them into an ugly snarl. Through her own act she had made Rod Bannister despise her, although she loved him.

An ugly thought staggered her. If the *Diana* had sunk, Ted Sherry had passed out of her horizon and she was free!

She must not think of that. Free or not, Rod was not for her. He hated her. And, being hated, she was doomed to spend days, and weeks, maybe months alone with him on this strip of jungle and beach, with a barrier of armed neutrality between them.

She found some dried palm fronds and replenished the fire. When it was blazing lustily again she crossed to the tangle of underbrush and pushed her way into the thicket.

Footprints in the marshy ground and broken bits of twigs indicated the direction Rod had taken, but he was not in sight. Sybil glanced down wryly at her torn water-stained stockings, the rent in her sport skirt, one from the wardrobe which Rod's sister had given her.

Then she twisted the skirt about her and plunged farther into the jungle. The sun, blazing overhead, gave her directions.

Here and there she saw small bushes of bright red berries, clumps of fruit that looked like tomatoes, but she avoided both. They looked tempting, but might prove poisonous.

Little pools of slimy water covered with water lilies warned her to watch where she stepped. Here and there tiny lizards, amazingly green, appeared, then scurried away.

Once a snake uncoiled its glistening scaly length from a tree trunk, and vanished in the thicket. Horrified at the danger she had just escaped, Sybil stood stock-still, clasping her hands over her pounding heart.

The shrill chatter of two little ring-tailed monkeys, playfully sporting from limb to limb of a banyan tree, frightened her again until she realized they were harmless.

Where was Rod? A terrible fear that he had not escaped the peril she had just encountered drove her on. She was dizzy and ill from anxiety and lack of food. Every moment she expected to stumble upon him, prone and lifeless.

Insects, reptiles, sharks! Had she been saved from a watery grave only

to die here in this jungle of poisonous weeds and rank underbrush?

SUDDENLY the thicket cleared and she found herself again in the open, with the blue sea in sight. Her relief upon seeing Rod in the distance was so great she ran toward him with outstretched arms, crying his name.

He came toward her. Her arms drooped wearily before they touched him. The scowl on his face banished all the warmth and joy she had felt in knowing no harm had come to him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"There are snakes in there," she stammered, "and monkeys."

He laughed. "The more reason for you to have stayed on the beach."

"I wanted to help," she said slowly. "Then I was afraid something had happened to you."

"No need to worry about me. I've made some interesting discoveries, however."

"Yes?" She felt listless, without interest now.

"First, this is an island; second, there is a fresh-water spring under that crag of rocks, and, third, we are not alone."

"Not alone?"

He nodded toward the rocks rising like a stone wall behind them. She saw a faint spiral of smoke against the blue sky.

"I was going to investigate that smoke when you called me," he said. "I've seen no indication of civilized inhabitants, so I'm a little puzzled about it."

"Savages?" she asked breathlessly.

Again he laughed.

"If we were in the Hebrides I'd say yes, but as I'm pretty certain we are somewhere in the Caribbean I don't think we are apt to run into cannibals. No, I'm rather under the impression we'll find some other poor shipwrecked devils in the same position as ourselves. Are you afraid to find your way back to the fire alone—or do you want to wait here for me?"

"I'll go with you," she said stubbornly, stung at what seemed his patronizing assumption of her cowardice.

"As you please."

They passed a huge turtle sunning on the sand. Rod remarked that turtle eggs were considered good food.

They reached the crags, and found them a sheer incline that blocked their passage, practically cutting the island into halves.

Great waves dashed against them where they jutted out into the sea.

Rod called "Halloa! Halloa!" When there was no response he flung off his coat and leaped into the water.

Horrified at what seemed his foolhardy act in view of the shark, Sybil stood breathlessly tense until a few moments later the man rejoined her on the sand.

"There's a battered schooner moored on the beach beyond the rocks, and some ten or fifteen Chinamen on the sand," he said grimly.

"*Chinamen?*" she gasped.

"Yes. About as woebegone and hopeless looking a gang as I've seen in a long time. Come on, we'll go back and have breakfast. It's just as well they don't know they have company."

CHAPTER XI

THE breadfruit, roasted in plantain leaves over the fire, the fish, broiled on the end of a bamboo rod, and the coconut milk, proved a not unsatisfactory meal, while the

mangoes and wild bananas were delicious.

Rod twisted some dried seaweed into a cigarette and lighted it.

"There's probably wild tobacco beyond those rocks," he said slowly, blowing a cloud of smoke about his head, "and possibly coffee trees. If so, we aren't badly off."

Sybil gripped her hands tightly. If only he weren't so casual. She felt like beating her head against the sand and screaming, while he sat there as if completely comfortable and at peace with the world.

"Those Chinamen—" she ventured, breaking a silence— "and the schooner—"

For a moment he stared at her, then he bent forward, nursing his knees.

"Sybil, we've got to face facts. I don't know where we are—this strip of land, from every indication, is an island, an uncharted one. I've little hope that the *Diana* has weathered the storm—or that any one believes we have been saved. That means we are doomed to remain here indefinitely, unless those yellow men take pity upon us. For obvious reasons, unless compelled to do so, I refuse to throw myself on their mercy."

"Me, you mean," she said with tight lips. "Yes, I only glimpsed them. They may be perfectly harmless, law-abiding Orientals—or they may be quite otherwise. The toss-up is not safe to risk."

A blur of tears in her eyes obscured his face. In spite of her efforts at control, two drops glistened on her cheeks.

"Poor child," said Rod with quick sympathy. "I've been brutal in my brusqueness. I forgot for a moment just what this is costing you. Your honeymoon—your husband—"

She pulled her hand away from his that he had placed on hers in a comforting gesture. Her husband! The man who had ruined her life! He thought she was grieving for Ted!

"I know you are suffering, Sybil," he continued quietly. "So am I. Louise was the dearest—I loved her very much. We must do the best we can for each other. If you'll try to endure me, I'll try to make you as comfortable as possible."

Endure him! "If only you didn't dislike me," she said tremulously, "it wouldn't be quite so hard."

"But I don't dislike you. Why should I?"

SHOULD she tell him she knew about Rod and Louise? No, better not—not yet. Her only chance of winning his respect was the fact he thought her ignorant of the wrong she had done his sister. If Louise were dead, that wrong would be magnified.

"I know you do, and it hurts," she said slowly, avoiding his eyes.

His face clouded.

"I'm sorry you feel that way. Perhaps some day I can convince you that you are wrong—for I—I admire you very much."

He rose abruptly, still speaking.

"I do not need assistance, but to keep your mind off your troubles I'm going to ask you to help me. Until I know for certain about those Chinese, I think it advisable you have some sort of protective shelter, and we'll see what we can do to build one."

A need for action, something drastic and difficult, took him again into the jungle. There was danger in the sympathy he felt for her, danger that her pitiful plea for his regard would tear down the barricade he had erected around his emotions, and toss honor and discretion to the winds.

Now, at all times, he must remember that she was not for him. He must fight against the urge to take her in his arms and comfort her. Ted Sherry might still be alive—God grant he was!—and Rod owed it to him, cad though he was, to fight him on fair grounds for the girl they both loved.

Ted deserved to lose her. What claim had that scoundrel on the love of a pure, beautiful girl?

"If only I had the right to sweep her into my arms," Rod thought, "to hold her close and tell her this island would be paradise if she loved me—that with her by my side nothing else in the world mattered. But I haven't that right—and she doesn't love me."

What was there about Ted Sherry that two women, as fine and adorable as Sybil Copely and his sister, should worship such a fellow blindly, oblivious of his faults?

His beauty? Bah, not all women were attracted by masculine beauty. Certainly not Louise, who studied values and was given to analysis and introspection. Louise still loved Ted Sherry, Rod knew that, though Ted had broken her heart.

And Sybil? What a mess life was! What an Eden they could make of this island if love joined their hearts!

ALL the long hot morning Rod tugged at branches, roots and bamboo rods, and piled great loads in Sybil's aching arms, who toiled with them down to the fire. Later he thrust the bamboo rods deep into the sand—far back from the beach—until a rude hut-like structure was erected.

With thongs of twisted vines he made a door, which swung open and shut and could be securely fastened on the inside. Seaweed covered with palm fronds and plantain leaves made a fairly comfortable bed, also a roof to shut out the rain, should it come.

Inside the hut, sheltered from the glare of the sun, was cool and sweet smelling.

By sunset their task was completed.

Both were inexpressibly w e a r y. There were blisters on Sybil's hands, and a bruise on her cheek, but she did not complain.

Neither had spoken again of the Chinamen on the other side of the rocks, nor the shipwrecked schooner, yet both had thought of them constantly.

There was something ominous in the fact that the yellow men had not appeared to discover the reason for their presence on the island, a menace in their silence. Sybil knew Rod was worrying.

He found yams and the spoor of wild hogs, and rigged up a trap. Some green coffee beans were a great discovery. These he placed in the sun to dry. Later he intended to break them open, and roast the kernels on the coals.

Strange how easily both had become adjusted to the new life! Sybil longed to bathe, but the presence of sharks in the sea made that inadvisable. Rod suggested he might find a pool on the morrow; until then they must be satisfied with sponging hands and face.

The sun dropped quickly. One moment the sky was a blaze of color, the next a thick blue veil descended over the land and vast expanse of water.

Fireflies darted in and out through the trees. A soft mellow breeze fanned the palm fronds, a faint, indescribable music filled the air, the music of winged things, rustling leaves, the swish of the water. A symphony of nature.

"Who are you? Where did you come from?" he boomed

"I wish," Rod said quietly, "I were a composer, and could put this music to note. I'd write it all in minors."

IN the firelight Sybil's features, sharpened by thirty-six hours of hardship, gleamed like chiseled alabaster. Her delicate blue-veined hands moved restlessly, first to her dark hair, wind blown and tangled, then to her lap.

She tried to relax, to push aside the acute consciousness of Rod's presence, to assume the casual friendship for him that his manner indicated toward her. But every time he spoke, a pulse throbbed in her throat. Every time he moved she felt an urge toward him, an almost uncontrollable desire to slip her hand into his, to rest her head against his shoulder.

She loathed herself for this desire. So short a time ago she had responded to another's embrace—and had been engulfed in disaster.

What manner of woman was she that one man could step into her life—leave it without a ripple of regret, and another absorb every waking thought?

But she hadn't loved Ted Sherry. Never at any time had she loved him—while she did love Rod Bannister. He might despise her, might even become brutal in his attitude toward her, but she would always love him.

She understood Louise better now. In such a way Louise loved Ted Sherry.

Louise? Was she alive, or had she gone to a watery grave with the man who had wrecked her life? Had they stood side by side and met death together, just as she had been willing to meet death beside Rod?

One by one the stars began to appear in the black canopy. The silver incandescent flung a pallid light on the boy and girl, silent and miserable near the fire.

"Are—are you going to share the

hut with me?" Sybil stammered, feeling the color stain her cheeks in the darkness. She felt impelled to ask, since there was no other shelter.

"No, I'll keep watch by the fire. I want you to fasten the door securely and sleep well."

"Do you think those Chinamen are up to something?"

"I don't know, but until I do I don't want them to see you."

"Well"—she rose—"I'll say good night."

She extended her hand.

His fingers closed about hers. The pressure made her heart leap absurdly.

She choked back a little hysterical laugh and went into the hut. There she removed her clothing, sighing with the relief of taking sodden garments from her bruised body, and flung herself down on the mattress of seaweed and palm fronds.

CHAPTER XII

FOR some time Rod sat smoking an improvised cigarette, then tossed it away and crossed to the hut. He listened, satisfied himself that Sybil was asleep and the door securely fastened within, then started away through the jungle.

Sleep for him was out of the question. The aloof, unconcerned manner he had assumed all the long day was a mask for his tormented thoughts. A burning desire to crush her in his arms was almost unbearable.

It had required tremendous will power to resist Sybil's allure; greater because of the danger he was almost certain threatened her. The barren island, the enforced solitude, and possible destruction of his yacht and beloved sister were small torture in comparison to what he feared portended.

That group of pigtailed Chinamen in black sateen trousers huddled about the fire beyond the rocks were not sailors. Their presence was a definite menace against the girl he loved, and he was going to learn who and what they were.

Armed only with a stout club made from a broken tree branch, Rod pushed his way into the clearing across the sand and to the mound of trees.

They shone crystal clear in the moonlight. With agility furthered by tense muscles and taut nerves he shinned his way to the top and perched there for a moment, looking down.

Near the fire were seated four men, beyond them, sprawling on the sand, were several others.

Rod saw the dark outlines of a rowboat on the beach, several crates, boxes and unquestionably firearms.

The four men by the fire were laughing and showed signs of intoxication.

As the boy stood poised on the rocks they began to sing lustily *in English,* a rollicking seaman's drinking song.

NO Chinamen, these!

Rod slid down the rocks, bracing himself in their shadows, and crept along noiselessly. Drawing closer, he obtained a better view.

A motley-looking crowd. One, a great red-bearded hulk of a man with grizzled red hair, huge shoulders and pouch, seemed to be the ringleader, for he rapped out a venomous oath at a younger, slimmer man when he started to rise, and the younger man dropped back as though cowed into submission.

The ringleader, he of the red beard, was in a tattered blue shirt and trousers. Two others wore fragments of sailor suits, and the third, what was once an officer's uniform.

The several men, sprawled on the sand, some smoking, some sleeping, were in various stages of undress, a disreputable, unshaven, tattered array of manhood. But white men, not yellow!

Rod blinked his eyes. Had he dreamed he had seen those yellow men this afternoon? Had the sun done queer things to his vision, given pigtails to cropped hair, sateen jackets to brawny muscles?

All his uneasiness for nothing. Of course these shipwrecked seamen looked disreputable; probably he did himself, with three days' growth of beard on the face, and garments in tatters.

The schooner was unquestionably a fishing smack, driven off its course by the hurricane, and if the survivors were bolstering up their spirits with a little rum it was no indication they were villains.

Boldly, but with his cudgel clasped tightly in one fist, Rod stepped out from the shadow of the rocks and approached the fire.

IF a bomb had exploded in their midst the four men could not have appeared more startled.

The red-bearded one sprang to his feet with an oath, dropping a bottle of whisky, and whirled belligerently on the newcomer.

"Who are you? Where did you come from?" he boomed.

Rod smiled. "From the sea, as I fancy you have also, my friends. Only I swam ashore with the aid of a lifebelt, and I see your craft beached yonder."

"Swam!" ejaculated an emaciated little man with a skin like tanned leather, and a bullet-shaped head devoid of hair. "Tell that to somebody who don't know these waters. There's sharks waitin' to nab ye the minute you stick your toe in it, and that's the blasted truth and no lie!"

"Nevertheless I swam," Rod replied quietly, "and, by a miracle of good fortune, arrived here safely."

"Alone?" The red-haired man asked, a cunning gleam in his narrow green eyes.

Rod hesitated. There was nothing to be gained by lying. "A companion and I had the misfortune to be swept off my yacht during the hurricane. We arrived here together."

"Yacht, eh?" The red brows wrinkled speculatively. "Yacht? You're one of them sportin' millionaires, then, I take it?"

Rod smiled assent. "A very poverty-stricken one at present, since I haven't so much as a pipe of tobacco or a roof over my head."

Baldy chuckled. "We got it over him there, ain't we, Red? We got a heap of tobaccy and good booze, and the ole *Lizzie B.* don't leak over much, and—"

"Shut up!" rasped the giant, Red. "Sit down," to Rod, "and give me the whole yarn. What are you doin' in these waters and what's your name?"

Rod explained briefly about the cruise and the storm, and when the other offered him a cigar, accepted it gratefully.

"Me," said the red-headed giant, "I'm Red Peterman. That's my craft, *Lizzie B.*, and I reckon you guessed her business. Rum. These are my mates, Baldy, Tom Blink and Bud Kellers. We run generally between Nassau and Miami—or Cuba and Florida, but for reasons of my own made a trip to Trinidad—and got caught in the squall."

"Then we aren't far from Trinidad?" Rod asked.

"Wal, it's a heap too far to swim," the other evaded, "or to expect to make it in a week or a year, with a schooner jammed through her hull."

"HOW long do you think you'll be laid up here?" Rod asked.

"That depends. But I'm telling you, brother, before you set your hopes too high, I'm takin' no passengers when I leave this island."

"But, great Scott!" Rod exclaimed. "You couldn't leave two white people stranded here, for God knows how long or to what fate?"

"But I could. I don't know anything about you and I can't take chances in my business. No, sir. I'll sell you a tin of tobacco or a crate of Scotch, maybe some blankets and canned beans, but I don't carry passengers—no, sir—not on *this trip.*"

Rod studied the fire, then he glanced around at the men. There was a malicious smile on the skipper's red face, a quizzical grin on Baldy's leathery countenance, and a glimmer of sardonic amusement on the faces of the two others.

One man, slim and dark, with regular features, was young, no older than Rod, but with a twist of cruelty to his thin mouth and a vicious glitter in his black eyes that robbed them of all appearances of youth.

Old in crime and vice, if not in years. "Bud Kellers," Red Peterman had called him, though his swarthy skin and coloring would indicate Southern blood and a Latin name.

When he spoke there was the slight lisp Rod had noticed in the accent of Spaniards, though he used much better English than the other men.

"Perhaps," he said, "the gentleman might make it worth your while, Red, to take him as a passenger. If he is rich—he will pay."

"Certainly." Rod spoke with hesitancy. Would a woman be safe with this crew? Dared he risk it? "I will pay. Whatever I have in cash I'll give you, and more when I'm landed in Miami."

He was half relieved when Red replied, with a shrug of his shoulders, "No passengers, and I'm not headed for Miami."

ROD rose abruptly. The cold-blooded callousness of the old scoundrel made him furious, but also convinced him his eyes had not played him tricks.

"Evidently you prefer yellow men as passengers," he said calmly, certain he had struck upon the truth, that the cargo of the *Lizzie B.* was not liquor, but Orientals.

"What do you mean?" Red exploded.

"That I know what your cargo is. Not booze, my friend, but Chinamen. One hundred a head, isn't it? And if you smuggle in enough of them it's a profitable but dangerous business. I saw them, to-day, on the sand. Humane of you, Mr. Peterman, to give them an airing, but indiscreet, since you seem to be afraid I'd be in a position to report your trade to the law."

"I'm a son of a sea cook!" snarled the big man. "And I suppose you'd have sailed with us, waited until we landed, then got us in bad with the authorities?"

"No," Rod answered, "it's no concern of mine if you wish to assist Orientals into a country that does not want them. I could close my eyes to your traffic if it means saving my own skin and that of the—friend with me,

but if you refuse us as passengers I can do nothing but keep my signal burning and hope some passing vessel picks us up."

"You got a long wait, brother," Red chortled. "A long wait. This island is too plumb small to be located unless you're looking for it. Me and my crew have been dockin' here off and on for ten year and you're the first stranger I ever knew to visit it."

"Then," said Rod easily, though anger thickened his speech, "your vessel didn't beach because of the storm, but—"

"But because I had an idee a revenuer was keepin' a sharp lookout, and it'd be safer to hide away for a while," Red supplied.

"Thank you." Rod moved from the fire. "You mentioned selling me some tobacco and canned goods. Name your price. I'm fortunate enough to have some water-soaked bills, and if I'm doomed to stay here indefinitely I want as many comforts as possible."

Red laughed. "You're a cool one. But I guess you know when to hold your tongue. I'm a peaceable man, myself, never fight if I can get out of it, but you'd be licked before you started. I'd like to help you out, brother, but can't afford to take chances. Too big a risk. I don't relish spendin' the remainder of my life in the pen—not at my age. Bud"—to the dark youth—"take the gentleman out to the *Lizzie B.* and give him some provisions with my compliments."

ROD followed the Spaniard to the rowboat, and stepped in beside him.

The *Lizzie B.* was moored on a sandbar some fifty yards from the beach. There was a lantern burning on the port side, but no evidences that any one was on board. She was listing badly, which gave truth to Red Peterman's story her hull had been jammed, but her decks were dry.

An ugly, dirty, vile-smelling little schooner, as vicious in appearance as the trade for which she was used.

Rod wondered if, after all, it was not better to risk their fate marooned on a desert island than to take a delicate woman aboard her. Men like Peterman and his crew, lawless and unprincipled, were not to be trusted where a woman was concerned.

Thank God, they did not know his companion was a girl, and if possible he would never let them know.

Bud Kellers proved to be taciturn. He left Rod on deck while he went below to the galley. Evidently it mattered little to him what more the stranger discovered, since he already knew of the smuggled Chinamen.

The seaman returned shortly with a sack. It contained a rasher of bacon, a tin of tobacco, several cans of baked beans, a bag of coffee and some condensed milk.

"Fifty dollars," Bud said nonchalantly.

"Rather steep, isn't it?" Rod inquired.

"Cheap at any price. Take it or leave it."

Rod pulled a roll of moist bills from his pocket. There were several fifties, and two one hundreds among them. He handed a fifty to the seaman.

Bud's eyes glittered avariciously as he took the bill and thrust it into his pocket.

"You're camping around on the other side of the island, aren't you?" he said.

"Yes."

"I'll row you there. It wouldn't be easy to climb the rock with this sack."

"I can manage it," Rod answered. He didn't want this man to know their exact location, and, above all, to see Sybil.

"Suit yourself."

CHAPTER XIII

IT was two hours after Rod Bannister plunged into the sea to rescue Sybil before the other passengers on the *Diana* discovered their absence. In that two hours a great deal had occurred.

Buffeted about by wind and waves, the *Diana* spun helplessly like a top. She became completely beyond control of the skipper, who had thoughts only for saving his ship and not a little unnerved by the loss of his employer.

Miles out of her course, when the knowledge was forced upon her passengers and crew that owner and guest were gone, the *Diana* was far distant from the spot where they had vanished, and none knew where to look for them.

Louise, in a hysterical panic, demanded that lifeboats be lowered and a search begun, but Captain McDuffy grimly informed her that no lifeboat could stand up long under that choppy sea, that it would be rank suicide to attempt it. Unless the *Diana* were sinking he would not lower the boats.

"But my brother!" she moaned. "He's overboard! Are we going to let him drown without trying to save him! Ted Sherry! Your wife is out there! Are you going to do nothing?"

Shocked into sobriety for the first time in days, Ted was ashen-faced and incapable of action.

All the night through he sat beside her and held her cold hand

Had Rod's and Sybil's loss been discovered sooner, there might be some hope of rescue, but it was too late now! No one knew where to look, what to do. Their own lives were in peril That peril was growing greater each moment.

For all his faults, Ted Sherry was not a coward, and as he tried to comfort the grief-stricken girl he had no thoughts for his own danger.

When Louise finally relaxed, white and deathlike upon the divan, he sat beside her and held one of her fragile, cold hands all the night through.

The others huddled together in silence, Wendy clasped tight in her young husband's arms.

"I don't mind dying very much, Peter," she whispered, "when we are together! We've been awfully happy, haven't we? It seems a shame two people who love each other so much and are so young should die, doesn't it?"

"We aren't going to die yet, sweetheart," he answered. "This isn't the end. Not for us."

MORNING found them hopelessly drifting. With the death of wind and the sea calmer there was chance of rescue.

Louise drew her hand reluctantly from Ted's, smiling at him with weary lack-luster eyes.

"Thank you for being so good," she said. "I let my own grief blind me to yours. You must be suffering terribly."

A spasm contorted his mouth.

"Sybil wasn't for *me*. I'm being paid for what I did— But, God, why did she have to pay too?"

"You loved her very much," Louise said softly, "and no one has a right to judge you under those circumstances."

"What a wonder you are. No other woman in the world would understand as you do," he answered huskily.

"Perhaps," she said, her voice a low, throaty monotone, "no other woman has loved as I have. We've been very near death, Ted. I've lost all I care for in this world—you—Rod—Sybil—and I seem to be without shame or false pride—any more. I loved you. You took my heart in your hands and crushed it into little bits, and they bled until there's nothing more left to hurt. And still I went on loving you. When Sybil turned against you, I still loved you and found excuses for you. When you made a beast of yourself, I still loved you—and I suppose I'll continue to love you until I die. Is it awful of me to tell you this?"

"No." He avoided her steady gaze. "No, it's rather marvelous. But very like you. There must be something decent at bottom in me if you can still care. Sybil loathed me. I don't blame her. By rights you should, also. I had honor once, Louise. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes."

"When I asked you to marry me, I loved you."

"Oh, no!" she deprecated. "No!"

"Yes, I did. For seven months I was absolutely faithful to you and positive I'd be completely happy with you as my wife—then I had that accident. Sometimes I wonder if the fall didn't do something to my sense of balance. I'm making no excuses for myself, understand, but emotionally I seem to be all unhinged. When I met Sybil I couldn't think of anybody but myself, and that terrible desire to own her. Forgive me, Louise."

"That's all right," she murmured. "I've fought it out with myself. If

it relieves you to talk, do it. We can be honest with each other now. No, Ted, you simply fell in love with her."

"Yes, I fell in love with her—and she's gone. I've made a mess of my life—yours—and taken hers. God!"

He buried his head in his hands with a groan.

"You are not to blame for her death. Don't think that, Ted, please." Her hand fluttered out and rested for a moment on his sunny curls. "No matter what had happened, you nor I had nothing to do with Sybil's death —if she *is* dead—"

"She went to search for me," he said stubbornly. "When I think of it, I feel as if I would go mad."

"But she must have joined Rod on the deck, and together they were swept out to sea. Oh, Ted, Rod and Sybil, so young, so full of life—and now—"

She sank back on the divan again, overcome with her emotion.

With an unconscious gesture of sympathy Ted bent quickly and pressed his lips to one of her hands, plucking pitifully at the fold of her frock.

"Louise," he whispered, "I'm terribly sorry!"

FOR two days the *Diana* drifted rudderless on a sea so placid and blue it was impossible to believe it had once been an angry demon, intent upon destroying life and property.

Captain McDuffy, gaunt and haggard; Karl Brikke, cheerful in the face of all hazards, and the crew, strove mightily to keep up the waning spirits of the guests on board.

So long as calm weather continued they were in no imminent danger, and it was inconceivable that some vessel would not rescue them before they were grounded.

Louise regained her composure, faced bravely the fact she had lost her brother and the dearest friend she possessed, and managed to hide her grief from every one except Ted Sherry.

His remorse, his acute distress over Sybil's death, and Louise's bravery, drew him closer to her than they had been even in the days of their engagement.

They suffered a mutual grief. Her marvelous understanding and capacity for forgiveness made him ponder deeply over the injury he had done her, made him wonder at his own callousness in having hurt one who possessed such a character.

On the third day a freighter, headed for New York on its way from Brazil, sighted the *Diana*. Two hours later Louise gazed with tear-stained eyes at the yacht, left derelict in the Caribbean, while the *Manacuso* steamed its way northward.

CHAPTER XIV

THE odor of coffee greeted Sybil's nostrils as she emerged from the hut. Rod was bending over the fire. He had made a bed of small stones and, after emptying a can of beans on a plantain leaf and washing the can, had turned it into a coffee pot.

"Prepare for a feast," he greeted her gayly, "I went rummaging last night and returned with this."

"Coffee!" she exclaimed. "Did the Chinamen give it to you?"

Without wishing to frighten her, he explained about his expedition and the need for caution.

"They're a bad lot, and I hope they don't learn you are on the island. Rum runners may stop at murder, but Chinese smugglers—ugh!"

"But you wanted them to give us passage," she said. "Suppose they had accepted your offer?"

"I didn't know their business when I made the offer. Luckily the skipper refused. He's pretty sure we haven't a chance to be picked up before he delivers his cargo or he'd never leave us on this island alive."

She shivered.

"How horrible! I've read that the men who smuggle Chinese into the States dump them overboard if they are in any danger of being caught, but I couldn't believe it's true."

"I'm afraid it is. But I don't think we need to worry. The rocks aren't easy to scale, and I fancy all that Peterman and his crew want is to be left alone. He says his schooner is jammed, but it looked fairly seaworthy to me; in that case they'll be leaving the island soon."

"And we'll be left here to wait—for goodness knows how long."

Her eyes stared wistfully off into space.

"Don't worry," said Rod. "I've an idea we aren't so very far from the mainland and it won't be long until some steamer picks us up. In the meantime we can be fairly comfortable. We've food and shelter—and fresh water and—"

He paused abruptly. The words, "and each other," stifled before he uttered them.

"Yes," she responded softly. "If only there were no sharks out there and we could go swimming, it might be sort of a lark."

"I don't think," he said after a little, "that any of Peterman's crew will come around to this side of the island, but during the day it's just as well for you to keep under cover. Especially if I'm not here. For precaution I'm going to rig up another hut farther inland for you, and take the one you have now for myself. But before I do I'm going to see if we can find some sort of swimming pool."

IT was strange how swiftly the days sped by. The erection of another bamboo hut, more elaborate and more comfortable than the first, occupied all the daylight hours.

With clam shells and a tin can beaten into a spade, Rod dug into the marshy puddles, cleared away pond lilies and tangled vines until a small bathing pool was produced.

Sybil spread palm fronds on the sand of their cabins, fashioned mats of twisted vines, mended their clothing with the aid of a thorn and fibers from the bark of a coconut palm; and tried various ways of cooking breadfruit in the utensils made from the empty coffee and tobacco tins.

They fished by the hour, and were rewarded with small but delicious seafood, crabs, oysters, clams. They found turtle eggs and roasted them over the fire, and but for the knowledge of menace behind the craggy rocks, and their sorrow over the possible fate of Louise and Ted, would have been almost happy.

They knew the *Lizzie B.* and her motley crew had not departed, for occasionally Rod stole through the thicket and saw the curl of smoke arising, but they had not been molested. Evidently Red Peterman had forgotten Rod's visit or did not care what happened afterward.

They kept their own fire burning constantly, and were ever on the lookout for a passing vessel, yet deep in the heart of both was a half-formed wish that rescue would never come: that they might remain the rest of

their lives on this island, surrounded by tropical beauty.

Rescue would mean separation. Civilization would part them forever.

Sybil's hair, wind-tossed and uncombed, was now a riotous mass of curls with purple glints in its ebony shimmer. Her ivory skin was burned to a rich golden.

Bare-armed, bare-legged, her frock little more than tatters, to the hungry-eyed man who sat opposite to her day after day, and casually bade her sleep well every night, she was the most beautiful creature in all God's world.

Hourly his love for her grew, until at times the desire to take her in his arms and tell her he adored her—that they were made for each other, that Fate, in having cast them adrift together, decreed they should grasp happiness—was so great he could scarcely fight it.

At those times he would leave her abruptly, and be gone for hours, wandering off through the jungle, his teeth set with determination, his hands gripping until his finger nails cut deep ridges in his palms.

When he returned he would be brusque and sullen, and Sybil, feeling that in spite of the camaraderie that had bridged the barrier between them, he still disliked her, would go to her hut and sob out her misery in loneliness.

A WEEK passed by. Long hours spent on the sand watching the sea gulls, the turquoise sea, occasional schools of flying fish, or tumbling porpoises.

Silent hours when both were lost in moody retrospect, when the barrier between them was almost a tangible thing. Hours of animated discussions of the plays they had seen in the past, the music they had heard, but might never hear again; the books they had read.

At such times the barrier was lowered and it was as though their hands clasped and their lips met, so keen was their love for each other.

Long nights, often sleepless, for darkness fell quickly near the Equator, and morning came early. Nights when Sybil sobbed heartbrokenly into her pillow of seaweed, when her hungry arms reached out for comfort and the love denied her; when her soul rebelled against convention, and the ironic injustice meted out to her.

Nights when Rod trampled viciously upon broken twigs and tangled weeds, oblivious of dangers lurking in the jungle, searching, praying for a surcease of the pain that gnawed at his vitals.

Every morning at daylight he took his plunge in the pool. Later, while he fished or hunted for food, Sybil paddled about in the cool water.

Since the men on the other side of the island had not annoyed them, they had relaxed their vigilance somewhat, and Sybil did not always stay close to the hut when Rod was away.

ONE afternoon he strode off in a particularly black mood. The girl, tormented at his attitude, and seeing no peace in the days to come, went into the thicket, intending to bathe.

Without removing her tattered frock she sat for some little time on a fallen log, her bare feet dangling in the water. Suddenly she became aware that eyes were watching her, black glittering eyes that held her in horrified fascination as a snake's would have done!

For a second she was unable to

move, her blood congealed with terror. Then slowly she rose, and started toward the clearing.

"Don't go!" said a suave voice.

A slim, swarthy man parted the clump of bamboo that had hidden him from view, and came toward her.

"So you are the other passenger Red Peterman wouldn't have on the *Lizzie B. Carramba!* What a joke on him! A girl! And a pretty one, at that! Wait till he hears of this; how his tune will change!"

Sybil looked at him steadily. He smiled, exposing white teeth like the ravenous grin of a wild animal.

She trembled violently, but strove to mask her terror.

"Do you mind stepping out of my way?" she asked coldly.

Instead, he moved closer and, as she recoiled, caught her arm.

"What's the matter? Don't you like my looks? Most girls do. Handsome Buddy, they call me all along the coast. Don't be in a hurry. Ain't you kind of lonesome, seeing no one but that guy that tried to dicker a passage with Red?"

"Take your hand off my arm," she commanded through set teeth. "If you don't—"

"Yes?" His grip tightened. "Yes?" bringing his face nearer.

Suddenly she lost control of herself. Those glittering eyes so close to hers, that red smiling mouth filled her with an unspeakable fear.

With her free hand she tore at his, screaming, "Rod! Rod!" again and again.

THE man laughed and pulled her closer. But before his lips could touch hers Rod pushed aside the tangled weeds and leaped to her side.

His blow caught the Spaniard under the chin, sent him reeling backward and into the pool. When he emerged, his face was livid with fury. A torrent of oaths and maledictions escaped him as he sprang toward the boy.

But Rod was prepared; his feet braced into the oozy marshland, his fists doubled.

"Run back to the hut!" Rod flung over his shoulder at Sybil, as he whirled on the other.

A second blow, deftly and swiftly timed, sent the intruder crashing against a banyan tree. He lay there for a second, stunned.

"Had enough?" Rod demanded, "for if you haven't, I'm ready to beat you to a pulp."

"You'll pay for this!" the Spaniard snarled, glaring viciously at him under lowering brows, and nursing a bleeding chin. "You can't knock me out and get away with it!"

"Perhaps. But blows count for more than words. You stay on your side of the island. If you don't, or if so much as to speak to that girl again, I'll kill you."

Sybil ran a few yards. Then she waited, sick and apprehensive, until Rod joined her. His face was grave, but he said lightly, "I don't think he'll bother you again."

"There are others—if they want to harm us—we could never protect ourselves—two against so many."

"I don't know about that. I'm pretty strong—and they're probably cowards. I wish I had a gun, though."

She was shaken still and unsteady as she walked. Twice she stumbled, although he had taken an arm to assist her.

"Don't let this worry you," he said, a note of tenderness creeping into his voice. "I shan't leave you alone again."

"But I'm more afraid for you than for myself," she cried involuntarily. "I heard what he threatened, and he meant it! If anything should happen to you—"

She felt the fingers that touched her arm quiver, saw the vein in his forehead throb under the tight skin, and the warm blood suffuse his cheeks. Abruptly he turned his face from hers.

"Don't worry about me," he said hoarsely.

She had angered him by her solicitude!

HE assumed a light-heartedness he did not feel the remainder of the day, sang cheerily as he cleaned fish, and scraped coconuts for a salad she was making of palatable leaves and the grated nuts, told her humorous anecdotes of his college days and insisted he'd had a dream that the *Diana* had been saved.

"One of these days, after we derelicts are rescued, we'll steam into New York to find Ted and Louise waiting to welcome us with open arms, and you'll forget your honeymoon was ever interrupted."

"That will be nice," she said, her face clouding as it always did whenever her husband's name was mentioned. "But surely if they are alive—and love us—they will be the ones to rescue us."

"Maybe they will."

Rod waited that night until he thought she was asleep. Then he brought some seaweed from his hut, flung it outside her door, and lay down, his club beside him, to wait for what might develop.

She knew he was there, but remained silent, her heart palpitating in a painful tattoo, her body chilled with apprehension.

The soft moan of the wind through the trees, the swish, swish of the water as it washed over the sand, finally calmed her nerves. Rod's quiet breathing informed her he slept. Finally, she slept also.

Suddenly the sound of voices awakened her. Rod's angry, protesting; a hoarse throaty growl; a lisping, higher pitched one; a sinister chuckle.

She lay motionless, gripping her hands in terror.

"What do you want?" from Rod.

"There's a girl here, and Bud says he's taken a shine to her. Fetch her out and let's take a look at her."

"Bud's lying."

"Yes Then 'spose you open that door and lemme look around."

"No! You keep out of there."

"Bud says the lady'd be a fine ornament to the *Lizzie B.*, and if she wants to travel with us, he's no objections to making her *Mrs.* Kellers."

"The lady is already married."

Another laugh. "Yeh? Well, I reckon if a skipper can perform a wedding ceremony he can divorce a husband. Don't let a little thing like a husband worry you none. Bud's a fine lad, and if he wants the lady I'm going to oblige him. How do you open this door?"

The fragile structure of bamboos shook under the brawny hands. Sybil leaped to her feet and cowered in the darkness.

"WAIT! *Wait!*" Rod rasped. "Good God! Haven't you a spark of manhood? Isn't your trade rotten enough, dangerous enough without adding kidnaping to it? Do you think you can get away with a thing like this? Listen. I'm a rich man—a very rich man. Leave this girl alone and I'll not only give you

every dollar I have on me—but a check for ten thousand you can cash when you reach the States."

"*Check?*" sneered the other. "Where'd you get a check?"

"I always carry a check book in my pocket. I have it now—even if I am stranded here. Is it a bargain? Ten thousand dollars—and a thousand cash—"

"Yes? Let's see the check and the cash."

The flare of a torchlight gleamed through the bamboo rods. There was silence for a moment. A silence during which Sybil prayed as she'd never prayed before in her twenty years.

Then: "Write it."

"You'll stick to your bargain? You'll go away?"

"Sure. My word's good."

The scratch of a pen. Then the sound of a sickening blow, a harsh triumphant laugh, and a low gurgling groan.

A shriek burst from Sybil's parched lips.

She clung to the side of the hut, her eyes widening with horror as blow after blow fell on its framework, as a gap appeared in one side, and an arm reached in!

She crushed her hand over her mouth, trying to choke back the hiccoughs of terror that escaped spasmodically.

A hulk of a man loomed in the aperture. Behind him were three others.

She saw, lying prone on the sand—another. Rod! Was he dead? Had they killed him?

The moon seemed to dip behind inky clouds, a smothering veil to close in about her. She fought for consciousness, but lost her battle. As Red Peterman touched her, she fainted.

TO BE CONTINUED

The Fabric of Our Love

WE wove a goodly pattern
Of life and love—we two—
We chose each harmonizing shade
Of color, fast and true.

The fabric lasted many years—
It seemed as good as new,
Then suddenly there came a break,
Just a fine thread or two—

Let's mend it with that beauty
We both have favored so;
With fine stitches of forbearance
The mending may not show!

—*Corinne F. Wright*

"What would you think if I told you I was boycotted in this town?"

And the Pursuit of Happiness

"You're a self-centered little poser," the man she loved told her. "You're not worthy of any man's love!"

By Francine Findley

"HIS name is Carlos — fancy! Awfully tall and good looking and the most charming manners! Rather a change after the hicks in this town."

Mallory James sat on the edge of her mother's bed in the bright late moonlight and sighed ecstatically.

"The whole lot of them were snubbing me right and left—as usual—and I was just about to come home when Drury Adams breezed up with him in

tow. It was perfectly evident that he'd asked to be presented—and—it was perfectly evident that he was mad about me. Believe me, if I could land some one like Carlos Deland, I'd make Franny Howard and the rest of them eat dirt! He comes of a perfectly grand family in Maryland and he's got gobs of money!"

"I told you to go," her mother beamed at her from a frilled pillow. "I just felt that something was going to happen at that fair! If only you weren't so stubborn, with your looks and your clothes you could have them jumping through hoops. There isn't a girl in this town that can hold a candle to you! Well, go on—"

Mallory's eyes gleamed in the moonlight. "Well, he's coming at ten tomorrow to take me out to the club for a round of golf and then lunch. Later we're going over to Blue Brook for tea and after that to the Meadow Field Inn for dinner and dancing!"

Mrs. James shook her head.

"You've made a mistake, Mallory, letting him know you have all that free time. It doesn't pay to be too eager. I do hope you let him make all the advances! A man never runs for a car, you know, when he's caught it. Men are natural hunters—"

A haunted look spread over Mallory's face. "Don't say that!"

"Well, I've told you time and time again, the more difficult a girl makes it for a man—"

Mallory sniffed faintly.

"And I've listened and listened, time and again—and lost out! This time, I'm going to get in my good work before Franny or Mavis or somebody gets a chance to poison his mind against me! Think of it! A house in Maryland, my own saddle horse—he was telling me that they have some wonderful horses—my own car—I'll just die if anything goes wrong this time. It seems to me my one hope is to keep him away from Franny and the rest of them as much as I can until Marion Stacmore's dance. That's one dance I'll be asked to this winter—if he has anything to say about it—and I just guess he will. The dance is being given practically for him!"

Mrs. James mused. "Marion's an awful little cat," she said, "that's the whole trouble. The girls are so jealous of you, Mallory, that they do everything they can to hurt you. It's too just bad. Ever since you were high school age, there's been a regular boycott. I never knew boys to be such sheep, doing exactly as Franny Howard tells them. One thing, I'm glad my daughter isn't the bold, brazen little minx that she is. I'd go somewhere and hide my head in shame!"

Mallory gave a short little laugh. "The boys seem to like her!"

Mrs. James's mouth curved peculiarly. "Maybe—now. But she's not the kind they break their necks to marry. You'll see."

Mallory patted back a faint yawn and arose. "We'll, I've got to get my beauty sleep. Have Minna call me about eight thirty in the morning. I want my nails done and that white sport suit has to be pressed." She dropped a kiss on her mother's forehead and left the room.

AT a little before ten the next morning young Deland arrived and was admitted by the large pink-faced maid of all work.

"Ef you'll just wait in the settin' room, Mallory'll be down right away. She's doin' some extry primpin' this mornin'!"

But Mallory had finished "primp-

ing" and had reached the head of the stairs just in time to hear Minna's guileless remark, to see the amused smile that crossed Deland's face.

Shaking with rage, she paused until he had entered the living room, then flew down the stairs, silently, two at a time. Instead of going directly to the living room, she sped after Minna, who was retreating kitchenward through a narrow corridor that ran from the front of the house.

Closing the door of the corridor sharply, she called with suppressed fury to the maid.

"You stupid, thick-headed idiot! How many times have I told you not to refer to me as Mallory when people call! And haven't I told you not to carry on conversations! Keep your place! What do you suppose that man thinks—you telling him I've been upstairs primping!"

Minna's round pink face set stubbornly.

"Well, you was primpin'! I never see such goin' on. An' you needn't be impudent to me fer bein' a little pleasant and friendly-like. An' you needn't be takin' me down a peg fer fergittin' to call you Miss James in front of strangers—when I've been callin' you Mallory ever since you was knee-high! An' as fer me keepin' my place. If I'd 'a' kept my place, who'd 'a' ironed that white suit you got on—I ain't hired fer them extrys, an' if it weren't fer your pa, I'd be leavin' this house this minute!"

As she spoke her voice rose, soared, reëchoed through the narrow corridor. The moment it fell to silence, Mallory turned on her heel and closed the door softly behind her as she headed toward the living room, praying that Carlos Deland had not heard what had taken place.

There was a shamed little feeling in her heart that came from the knowledge that she'd no right to speak to Minna as she had spoken. Of course, the woman was stupid, she did take liberties; but she did favors, too, like the pressing of the white wool suit that Mallory wore. The many times she had left her necessary duties to act as lady's maid, as laundress—

"Minna knows I didn't mean anything," she consoled herself as she stood in the doorway, holding out her hand and smiling into Carlos Deland's dark eyes.

Had he heard? She couldn't tell, but it seemed to her that there was a faint coolness in his manner that had certainly not been there the night before.

Just in case he had: "Minna, our maid, is such a good girl, but she does the most surprising things. I hope she didn't do anything to startle you. One thing you'll have to get used to is hearing her call me Mallory. It's the quaintest thing. Once, mother was having a tea and Minna distinguished herself and us by telling all the guests how good everything was, all the eggs and the butter that had been used to make them so. 'Eat hearty now an' don't be havin' Mis' James thinkin' you don't like things.' I can hear her yet. We've managed to trim off some of the rough edges, but I guess she'll never be the polished jewel of a servant one reads about. But we wouldn't lose her for anything!"

Deland smiled.

"We've an old stableman at home and I suppose I'll be 'little Carlie' to him as long as we both live. If I should command him to call me Mr. Deland it would break his heart!"

Mallory's cheeks flushed. Was that a reprimand? At any rate, she felt

she'd made too much of the incident in her conversation with Deland. Perhaps it would have been better to have said nothing.

ALL the way out to the Country Club she tortured herself, wondering just what attitude she should have taken. It spoiled the ride for her, made her so self-conscious that Deland finally asked if the affair of the night before had tired her?

"You seem a little nervous this morning. Perhaps you'd rather just ride until lunch—"

"Oh, no! I'm perfectly all right. Only I did overdo a bit yesterday. I was on one of the committees and so much of the real work and planning was up to me. You know how girls are—they'll leave everything to the willing worker—and I just couldn't bear not to see the thing a success."

"Franny Howard was on one of the committees, too. She promised me a dance, but I didn't get it. She was so busy—"

Mallory gave a faint, silvery little laugh.

"So busy out in that maroon roadster of hers smoking cigarettes with Teddy Ford—"

"Ouch! You don't like Franny very well, do you? I'm a stranger here—"

"Oh, Franny's all right. Of course, I like her. But it seems to me she's just a bit—well—" Mallory paused and dimpled. "There isn't a particle of harm in Franny, but she's so careless of appearances. Sitting out there in the dark with Ted for nearly two hours—well, you know how people talk in a small town. I suppose if I weren't so fond of her, I wouldn't mind what people say. But it makes my blood boil—"

"Don't get upset about others' affairs so easily. Franny looks to me as if she could get along."

"Now, yes. But later—well, I hate to think of Franny developing into the kind of girl that men don't marry!"

In that moment Mallory looked curiously like her mother. There was the same gleam of the eye, the same peculiar curve to the lip.

Deland gave her a swift, surprised glance, then turned his eyes to the road.

"I don't think there's much danger of that. Franny's a topping girl. I've known her ever since I was a kid—she and my sister Constance were inseparable. Our two families used to meet at Holland's Beach every summer."

"Oh." Mallory made a small sound. "I didn't know that you and Franny were such old friends." The words sounded flat and a silence that followed them became almost intolerable to Mallory. She began to feel that she hated herself and the boy beside her for his championing of Franny. But, most of all, she felt that she hated Franny.

Wasn't it Franny Howard who was chiefly responsible for the way the young people of the town acted toward her? Who else but Franny was to blame for those level, cool glances the boys gave her? The way they shied away from her? Popular girls were always that way—unwilling to share their throne, unwilling to lose the allegiance of even their lesser slaves.

Naturally, Franny had tried to kill Carlos Deland's interest in her.

When it seemed that she must scream to shatter that unbearable silence, that sudden cool aloofness of Deland's, he leaned toward her and took her hand.

"You know, when I saw you com-

-ing down the stairs last night at the fair, there was something about you that set you apart from any other girl I'd ever seen. A sort—of sweetness—oh, I don't know how to say it, but —but—don't disappoint me!"

His dark eyes were looking into hers with a curious pleading look that Mallory couldn't understand.

"Disappoint you? How?"

"Why—I—I scarcely know how to tell you what I mean." His dark face flushed and he turned his glance back to the road again. "I suppose I'm wanting to find that you're really—that you're as sweet, as kind—"

Mallory drew away from him a little. "That depends upon what you consider sweet and kind!"

"A man never runs for a car when he's caught it! Keep a man dangling—" her mother might have been there beside her, cautioning, instructing.

When Deland touched her cheek gently, she laughed.

"What a ladies' man we are! My dear, this is so sudden. And—here's your hand back. It may get lost, leaving it about like that!"

Deland stared at his hand, then at the girl.

"You needn't be on the defensive with me. Really."

ALL during their round of golf it seemed to her that he watched her with a curious expression at the back of his eyes, as if she puzzled him.

"You're watching me as if you'd never seen a girl before," she challenged as they were going toward the clubhouse for luncheon.

"I—I beg your pardon. It's just that I've never met a girl quite like you before. I have the feeling that I'd have to know you a long time before I understood you—and yet it seems somehow that I've known you always!"

Mallory drew her brows together and gave a short little laugh.

"That's an interesting line!"

"Oh, but it isn't a line. It's—you're so difficult to—"

Mallory smiled inwardly. So he considered her difficult. So far, so good.

As they sat at luncheon, she was recognizing the fact that she ought also to be fascinating. Just how one accomplished being difficult and fascinating at the same time was something her mother had not explained. Lifting her glance from the crisp salad before her, she fluttered her lashes and gave a queer half smile into space.

"I've been thinking about what you said—you know, my being difficult." She mused a moment. "I suppose when a girl's had as many disappointments and tragedies as I have, it's bound to make her that way. And bitter, too. I suppose that's why I laugh so unexpectedly—to forget the tears."

Deland's brows drew together. "I say. I didn't mean to pry. I—wouldn't you like to dance?"

The radio at the end of the room murmured enticingly, the narrow stretch of perfect floor was a temptation, but Mallory shook her head slowly. She was thinking beyond the moment: to the dance that Marion Stacmore was to give—that she might miss.

A week was to elapse before then, a week in which she might not get that last-minute invitation. A week for the cats to get in their deadly work with Carlos, turn him against her. Being her mother's daughter, could she man-

age to turn a disaster to her advantage?

There was the covert light of calculation in her eyes as she said softly, "No. I think I'd rather tell you something—then maybe you won't want to dance with me. Maybe you won't be seeing—or be seen with me any more."

"Oh, I say—"

Mallory gave him a slow, sad smile. "You may even be told to stay away from me."

Deland stared. "I don't think any one would presume—"

"That's all you know about this town!" Mallory declared vehemently. "What would you say if I should tell you that I'm practically boycotted here? That I'm never asked to any of the parties—or almost never—"

"But you'll be at Marion Stacmore's."

Mallory lifted her delicate brows.

"Will I? Well, if I am, it will be because you insist!"

"But, that won't be necessary. I'm certain you're too sensitive, too imaginative—"

Mallory shook her head again. Bit by bit, little by little, she sketched out a life of isolation from the younger people of the town and without actually saying so, she allowed him to understand that jealousy was the motive of the gesture that so shut her out.

AS she sat across from him in her white wool suit with the perky white hat shadowing her eyes, she was very lovely. Almost Carlos believed her. Almost.

But the memory of what he had heard in her own home as she'd spoken to the maid, what she had said about Franny Howard, floated to the top of his consciousness. That, and the absurd attitude of defensiveness that she had shown; the odd fluttering look that she had given him only a little while before.

He had been quite truthful when he had said that she was difficult. Difficult to classify, he had meant. Never had he known a girl like her. Those ungenerous remarks about Fran, now—he wasn't willing to let them go as sheer cattiness. And yet, what else could have prompted them? That he was strongly attracted to Mallory, he frankly admitted to himself, as he had to her.

He looked off across the room, waved to Franny Howard—and surprised a queer, distressed expression on her face as she caught sight of Mallory.

It seemed impossible, but probably Mallory was right. Perhaps even good old Fran, who was a plain little thing, *was* jealous of her beauty.

"You know, you're lovely!" It was wrung out of him. He smiled into Mallory's eyes. "Couldn't we dance?" It seemed to him that he must do something, show these people that no matter what they thought of this exquisite, glowing girl at the table with him, he was proud of her, proud to be with her.

The thought flashed through his mind that she might have been ostracized for other reasons than jealousy. A skeleton in the family closet—some innocent indiscretion of her own. He knew how cruel these small towns could be. But nothing mattered, nothing but the fact that she was returning his smile, rising, holding out her arms.

As they danced, he held her close. "You know, I could—maybe I am—falling in love with you!" Direct, sincere, his eyes met hers and looked through them into her soul.

And in that moment something happened to Mallory.

ALL thought of him as Carlos, son of "the" Delands of Maryland, was swept out of her head and her heart. All thought of the horses, the houses, the motors that might be hers as his wife; all thought of making Franny Howard and the others knuckle under became blurred, unimportant. Nothing was of moment, nothing mattered but having this dark boy care for her as he had said he might care—no, that wasn't it, either. Nothing mattered so much as her own caring!

For the first time in her life, Mallory James was face to face, heart to heart with some one to whom she must pour out whatever gifts were hers by chance of youth and beauty.

Her eyes grew cloudy, her sweet, petulant mouth twitched spasmodically. "Oh, my dear—my dear!" Yearning was in that faint, unspoken cry, echo of that ache to give that was gnawing at her.

And then panic possessed her.

A shadowy procession of youths who had advanced almost to this point with her, only later to be swirled back into the still more shadowy company of the boys who gave her those cool, level, distant glances, stalked through her consciousness. Always, something had happened to estrange them.

Was her mother right? Had she been too eager? Had jealous whisperings of other girls turned them aside? What did it matter? Nothing had ever mattered before. Nothing would ever matter again. If she should lose Carlos—

Her heart contracted, her eyes filled with sudden tears. "Oh, I mustn't lose him! I mustn't!"

Mutely she kept time to the music, but inwardly she cried out for some plot, some plan to guide her. Only her mother's advice came back to mock her, throttle down the warm, high flood of her emotions.

"Keep a man guessing—let him dangle. Men are natural hunters!"

So it was that, with all of her swaying, urging her toward Carlos, she fled—put the woods of evasion between them by a few inarticulate words.

"I believe your story!"

Trite, a little vulgar, the expression fell, seemed to shatter between them like brittle glass.

How was he to know that the speech was meant for bright challenge—a will o' the wisp to coax him on? The flush died and left his dark face gray about the lips. He looked again into Mallory's eyes and seemed to find them hard, taunting.

Love, the thing that he had barely dreamed about, had come to him for this girl, raising her aloft, setting her apart, driving him to excuse inexcusable things that she had done and said, making him see sweetness where there could be no sweetness. Mallory James had had that power over him, when girls like honest, straightforward, kind Franny Howard, worthy, brave, fine girls—girls a man might be proud of—

Rage—a white anger deluged him like a wave, and without realizing what he was doing, his fingers tightened on Mallory's arms and he shook her violently, there in the center of the dance floor.

"What sort of a girl are you!"

It seemed to him that he was shouting, but Mallory scarcely heard his voice above the din of the music.

"You're—you're hurting my arms!"

There was a kind of fright in her eyes, a whimper in her tone.

"You've been hurting my heart—all day!"

"For Heaven's sake, let's get out of here—if you're going to make a scene! People are staring at me!"

Mallory thought he was going to shake her again. His grip of her tightened, he thrust his face close to hers. Then as suddenly that grip relaxed and he thrust her before him onto one of the verandas, dim green from the shadow of vines.

"Staring at you! I wonder if you've ever had a good look at yourself!" Almost forcibly he pushed her into a chair and stood towering above her.

IF Carlos had never known a girl like Mallory, certainly she had never known any one like him. In all her telling, her mother had never told her that the hunter might turn and rend his prey.

She opened her lips to speak, but he stopped her.

"What a cheat you are! You look so soft—so sweet—so—all that a man could love! And there's no gentleness in you—no generosity. You're full of hard little suspicions! Petty—what kind of a game is it you're playing? You look out of your eyes and egg a man on to letting himself want to love you and then you laugh at him, cut him off!"

Mallory couldn't face him. She turned away and buried her head in the crook of her arm.

For a moment there was silence, broken only by the dance music that drifted out to them there in the green gloom beneath the vines.

Then Carlos was talking again, pouring out his scorn upon her:

"Somewhere down underneath there must be something—" For the second time there seemed pleading in his tone. There was a pause—as if he were waiting for her to reply, somehow justify herself. Then he gave an abrupt, mirthless laugh.

"What a break for me—to fall for a girl like you! A self-centered little poser!"

Mallory found her voice after the sting of that. She whirled, stiffening in her chair. "How dare you say such things to me!"

"A man dares to say anything to a girl he might have loved. A little while ago, when you said this town had boycotted you, I almost believed you. I was almost willing to hate them for what they'd done to you! But whatever's been done you've done yourself! I dare to tell you just what's the matter with you. There's no honesty in you. You want—and you refuse to give—even generosity! Not even a glimpse of your real self!"

Mallory sprang from her chair and rushed from the veranda, out across the clubhouse lawn. Panic had seized her. She must get away—home—away from this strange and terrible man who had hurt her more than she had ever been hurt before in a life full of minor hurts.

But escape was not for her at the moment. Carlos had followed her, taken her roughly by the arm, forced her into his roadster. What he said to her on the way home left no impression on her mind. Only the things he had said to her back on the dim veranda echoed and reëchoed, shook her faith in all that she had been taught, made her doubt herself.

AT home she stumbled up the stairs without a backward glance. In the upper hallway she came face to face with her mother.

"Well, I'm glad to see that you had

sense enough not to give that young Deland all your time. If you'll take my advice—"

To her mother's angry astonishment, Mallory closed her door sharply. It was doubtful if ever she would take her mother's advice again.

Emotionally exhausted, she threw herself across the bed and burst into tears, a flood of liquid fire that seemed to sink upon her heart and consume it.

For the very first time she was looking at herself, seeing, not the enviable beauty that her mother had sketched for her, but the selfish, self-centered little poser that Carlos Deland had called her.

When had she ever thought of giving anything? Always, her hands had been outstretched to grasp.

For a long time she lay, reviewing these newly acknowledged facts about herself. Reviewing all the comforting lies that she and her mother had devised between them to explain her empty state. Unaccountably, her mind slid to her father. It was amazing how seldom she thought of him.

"Keep a man dangling!" her mother had said, and had lived up to the precepts of her own teaching. Casper James, that gray, faded father of hers, was a dangling man—a man never certain of his wife's tempers, forever apprehensive of her moods.

And yet, somehow Mallory knew that his love for her mother had persisted, not because of the cunning technique devised to hold him, but in spite of it. Love—the eternal! If it existed devices were not needed to hold it secure.

Much good such late-found knowledge would do her now! She turned and buried her head deep in her pillows.

As she lay there, all her life passed in review before her, all the things her mother had said rang in her ears. How could she have told Mallory such things? How could she have come to believe them, herself? There wasn't any answer. Mallory turned on her side and stared into the darkness.

THE afternoon had gone.

"Mallory," her mother called to her softly through the closed door, "your dinner, dear." There was the tinkle of dishes, silver on a tray.

Mallory blinked at the sudden light as Mrs. James entered; light that fell sharply across her from the hallway.

"I don't want any dinner—and, mother, don't turn on the light." Mallory rose and closed the door. The thing she had to say was better said in darkness.

Sitting beside her mother on the bed, she told her all that had taken place that afternoon.

"You see it's been wrong from the beginning. The others didn't matter. That was just—oh, any girl wants to be popular—have boys rushing her. But this—is real!"

Mrs. James moved impatiently.

"That's utter nonsense, Mallory. Why, you scarcely know the boy! There's no such thing as love at first sight!"

There was a space of silence, then Mallory spoke out of the sheltering darkness.

"I don't think, mother, you know much about love. I don't think anybody does, really. It's just something—that is—or isn't!"

Then she herself flicked on the light and moved toward her dressing table. She reached for the hat that she had worn that afternoon.

"Where are you going?" her mother asked sharply, nervously.

"To Carlos. I'm going to tell him the truth—admit everything he said this afternoon was true. Tell him I love him!"

"Mallory!" Her mother was up, clutching at her arms. "You couldn't do anything more insane—more fatal. If—if this boy cares at all, he'll come to you!"

Mallory smiled whitely. "Love can stand the truth—or it isn't love."

"But you're not going to the Stacmore's house and ask—"

Mallory was out the door, going down the stairs.

"Yes," she said over her shoulder.

AT the Stacmore door the trim maid eyed her queerly, all but gasped as she asked for Carlos.

Years drifted by as she sat staring at the mantel in the prim drawing-room. And then he was there beside her, looking down at her with cool eyes.

"I—had to come. I—"

Quietly he closed the door, but said nothing, just held her eyes with his.

"I—" she began again, but something caught at her throat, stopping her breath. Her hands, lying in her lap, clutched frantically and she bowed her head, fighting back the tears.

Still Carlos did not speak nor move. Then she stood up, crossed to him.

The tears that she hadn't conquered slipped down her cheeks, sparkled like dew upon the white wool of the suit she wore, but her wet eyes met his bravely, with valor.

"I was all the things you said I was this afternoon—a selfish, self-centered little poser—full of little lies. I've even lied to myself—about Franny and the others being jealous. It—it was easier—than—letting myself see the truth. And I tried to hurt Franny with you—because I'd made myself believe that she was hurting me.

"And — and when you said you were falling in love with me—I laughed—because I didn't want you to know the truth. I was going to keep you guessing. I thought it was the way to—not to lose you. And I couldn't bear to lose you—because I love you, too. I'll never love any one else."

The clock began to tick the years away again through the silence. Then it seemed to beat out a refrain: "Insane! Fatal! Insane! Fatal!" So her mother had labeled this action.

"There's nothing more."

Her own voice echoed in her ears as her leaden feet carried her toward the door.

"Oh, yes, there is!"

Carlos drew her toward him. His arms enfolded her compassionately.

"My poor darling! Oh, my dear! I knew it was there. I knew it was there all the time. It was in your eyes, smiling up at me through all that shoddy, make-believe—that sweet, honest little heart of yours. It had to fight its way up—that's why I couldn't help you—why I didn't dare help you say what you'd come to say."

His lips were against her damp cheeks, upon her mouth. Then he held her at arm's length.

"You know what I'm going to ask you?"

Mallory nodded.

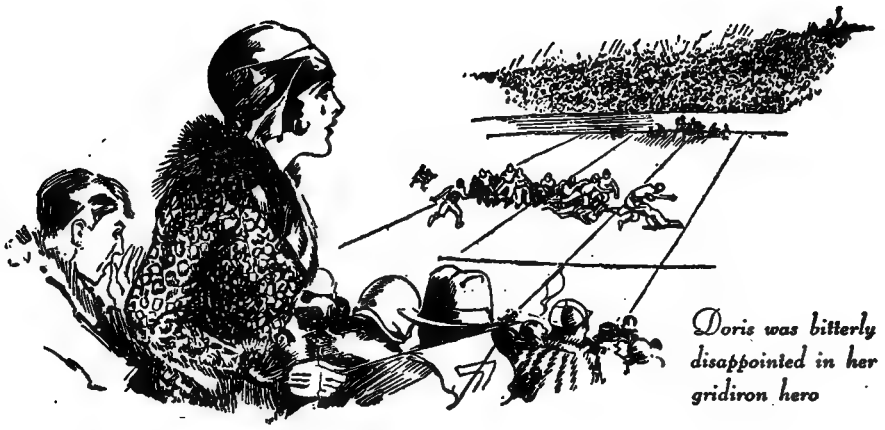
"How soon can we be married?"

"To-morrow."

"You darling!"

"I don't believe in keeping a man dangling!" Mallory stood on tiptoe to kiss him. "And I suppose I'll be pursuing you all the rest of our lives."

Man is a natural hunter? Perhaps. But the ancients worshipped Diane—goddess of the hunt!



Doris was bitterly disappointed in her gridiron hero

Cupid's Touchdown

Co-eds, football and campus rivalry woven into a glamorous colorful tale of collegiate life

By Shirley Brander

DORIS read in his look her own doom. Ward Bentley was introducing the new girl to them, and Hugh was staring at her as though she were a miracle.

He had forgotten Ward, forgotten that Doris was with him. He just stood there, his eyes riveted on the girl—Muriel Stanton, her name was.

She was a glamorous-looking creature, tall, slender and willowy. Her ash blond hair was in a smart bob, and her Nile green evening gown was the last word.

There was a touch about her expression and her make-up which you don't often see in Southern girls, a daring whiteness and sophisticated poise.

"I'm so flattered to meet 'Flash' Farron, the great Marcross halfback."

Her words were clipped and cool, but were spoken in a voice poised and musical.

She made Doris feel a sense of inferiority. Doris, typical of Marcross co-eds, was satisfied with a dab of rouge and lip stick over her naturally fresh, glowing young skin, and she had the warm enthusiasm of the Southerner in her face.

It was a pretty face, with soft lines and a full red mouth which too many men had found irresistible. But beside this aristocratic creature she felt positively crude.

If only she could do something to

attract Hugh's attention back to her; but he was grinning self-consciously at the new girl's flattery, and a deep crimson was suffusing the brown of his skin.

It made him look very handsome, while the embarrassed gesture of running his hand through his brown hair was boyishly appealing. Doris had found it appealing so often. This Muriel Stanton obviously liked it, too.

"Do you live in Marcross," she asked him, "or attend the college as an out-of-towner?"

"No," he said. "Yes, I mean. I live in Marcross, lived in Marcross all my life."

"We had a hard time keeping him here," Ward Bentley put in. "The big universities tried to steal him away from us, after they saw his playing at high school."

Muriel Stanton acknowledged this with a slight nod. Hugh scowled at Ward, then turned his helpless gaze back to Muriel. Doris was beginning to feel like the third person on a midnight ride.

The music started then, and Hugh said falteringly: "Will you dance with me?"

"That's going to be the high point of my evening," she replied, going immediately into his arms.

Ward became aware of Doris standing there.

"Don't bother about me," she said. "I'm just something left on the picnic ground."

"He surely tumbled in a Big Way. But—they all do." Ward sighed resignedly. "Let's dance."

Doris tried to keep her eyes from following what she had to admit was a marvelous looking couple.

"Who is she?"

"She's from out of town, visiting Frances Pollard. Harry Pollard brought her to-night."

"Why'd you do me the huge favor of introducing her to Hugh?"

"She asked to meet him, little one."

"So—malice aforethought."

"Well, as captain of the best football team Marcross ever had, Hugh is not exactly unknown."

"I wish he were unknown," she said fervently.

Some one cut in then and Doris was whisked away. Her new partner said:

"Did you lamp the 1929 model society vamp?"

DORIS heard variations of that question all evening. Her ears rang with the new girl.

Hugh was in a daze. When he wasn't dancing with Muriel, he followed her around with a doglike expression, and as soon as the man who had cut in on him was cut in on, Hugh swooped upon her.

"He doesn't know I'm here," Doris thought helplessly.

She wasn't having a very good time with the other people. She danced a little too long with each partner. As this continued the partners decreased and she danced interminable periods.

Toward the end of the dance she was definitely "stuck." Round and round the floor she circled with the hapless, perspiring man.

Doris felt panicky.

She had never been stuck before. She had long recognized that she had no great popularity in this younger set of Marcross, those just outside the débutante class. She was tolerated because of Hugh.

Neither she nor Hugh lived in the fashionable section of town, from which most of this set was drawn. Hugh had been rushed in during his

senior year at high school, when he was captain of a successful team, and during his three years at Marcross College he had been among the favorites.

Doris's own position had been firmly established, but she had never been completely enough accepted by the girls to be genuinely popular herself.

As her partner struggled valiantly to prevent showing his distress, Doris grew desperate.

In this Southern town a girl gets a big rush as long as other fellows are rushing. But once it is observed a man is stuck with a girl, they desert her as though she were a pariah.

The music ended, and Doris faced a three or five minute wait with her partner, whose conversation was limited at best, and had already been exhausted.

She saw Hugh standing enrapt before Muriel Stanton, grinning and talking animatedly. It was toward the end of the dance, and people were leaving.

Doris said determinedly: "Take me over to Hugh."

When they approached the engrossed couple they were not noticed. Doris announced in a clear voice:

"Hugh — I want to go home, please."

He looked at her as though he had never seen her before. Then his attention focussed. He might have been descending from a great height to normal air and normal people. Doris felt Muriel's cool gaze on her, she felt her partner shuffling with embarrassment, but she held her ground.

"Don't go yet," Hugh said. He sounded as though her going had little to do with him.

Doris felt a rush of humiliation. She couldn't back out. She had to say, firmly: "Yes, I want *you* to take me now." She knew the blood was rushing to her face by being forced to this painful task.

He half frowned.

"All right," he said ungraciously. "Wait over at the cloak room and I'll be there soon."

HUGH drove home in sullen silence. Finally Doris could stand it no longer. She said:

"Don't be griped, big boy. I didn't mean to spoil your party."

"You might 've waited a while and not interrupted me like that."

"Well, I had to attract your attention some way. You'd forgotten I was there." Doris tried to speak lightly.

"I hadn't forgotten. But you don't meet a girl like that every day."

Hugh was unconscious of the thrust that was to her. He was unconscious of everything but his absorption in this new girl.

"She *is* interesting looking," Doris forced out.

"She's the kind of a woman I've always longed to meet. You know, sort of different—sophisticated."

"Yes, she's the kind."

Doris remembered his other infatuations, when he had been attracted by an exotic type. None had hit him as hard as this, so completely as to make him forget her own feelings.

No words of love had ever passed between them, no promises. It was only that since Doris started to high school, Hugh, who had then been a junior at college, had walked to school and home with her. They had lived in the old section of Marcross, and were the only pupils on their block going to high school. It had been a mile walk. During those two years Doris had received all his confidences.

When he went to Marcross College he had ridden the trolley car, so Doris started riding to high school, and he came by for her every morning. He had taken her to all his fraternity dances, and, as he became a part of this younger set, he had taken her to all their dances.

She had allowed Hugh to absorb her, to become the most important thing in her life. She had never imagined a situation like this, and she didn't know how to face it. As they drove down the dark avenue, shadowed by trees, she knew she was foolish for not having prepared for it.

He pulled up in front of her house and got out immediately. Doris couldn't help but feel the pang of the difference from other nights, when they sat and talked about themselves and their future.

"Sorry I got to rush off, honey," he said. "Getting toward the season's opening now, and got to keep closer training."

"Sure," Doris replied. "Take care of yourself."

THE following days, when Doris came home from the office, she wasn't contentedly willing to wait around the house for Hugh to drop over. She knew he wouldn't be dropping over.

But she didn't know what else to do. What fellows she did know well enough for them to come to the other side of town for her, had been scared off by Hugh. And the fellows in her own neighborhood had long since decided she was too high-hat for them.

Each night she had to face the lonely evening, restless and unhappy. It was getting chilly to sit on the porch, and it was stuffy in the house.

The falling leaves of the magnolia trees, brushed by the autumn wind, made her especially sad. Occasionally cars would shoot past with youthful laughter trailing behind. She felt completely deserted.

On Friday night she went over to see Sally Talbot.

Sally said: "Who died and left no money?"

"Worse and more of it," Doris replied. "Hugh's giving me the ozone."

"I heard about his high-stepping with this Stanton creature. They were seen at Holland's Inn last night—or rather this morning."

"You mean Hugh was out after midnight?" Doris was incredulous.

"It was something like two o'clock and they were still there."

"But his training!"

"From the goofy look on his face he was training to take Jack Gilbert's place."

Doris thought that over, making no attempt to hide her feelings. It would have been useless.

"Ah," said Sally, "don't take it to heart. Any man's apt to fall for a swell blonde like that."

"I'm glad to know that. It helps a lot."

"Are you going around sunk because Hugh's got another of his crushes?"

"This is not another crush. This girl's his dream, the one true love of his life." Doris made a feeble effort at sarcasm.

"Well, you know what *I* think of a man who'd pass you up?"

"Sorry, honey, but that doesn't help a bit. I keep right on thinking the same."

"Well, I suppose you want to go to the game to-morrow."

"Will you go with me?"

"I'd love to."

"Gee," Doris said wistfully, "it was always such fun before; the opening game of the season. This year—"

"I know. Well, maybe he'll be in such bum condition he'll play a rotten game and you can give a nasty cackle."

"That's what I'm afraid of, he might be in bad condition."

"Funny girl! You'd better vanish now, I'm expecting my date — unless you want him to round up a man for you."

"No, thanks."

Doris walked the half mile to her home, tortured by miserable thoughts. This other girl couldn't love him much if she didn't care what he did with himself.

AT the game her worst fears were confirmed. The opening game was always with a lighter team, and Marcross looked on it more as a workout. Last year, when Hugh had become a sensation, they had defeated this team by something like sixty to nothing. To-day Hugh had none of that brilliant coördination which won him the name of "Flash" Farron from sports writers.

Doris was bitterly disappointed in her gridiron hero. He played listlessly. His natural talents, speed and strength and skill, were too great for a lighter team to stop him completely, but his work was not impressive.

The Marcross team felt the indifferent playing of their captain. The opponents crossed the Marcross line for the first time in five years, and the final score was thirty-five to seven.

Sally's date for the after game dance had brought along a boy for Doris. For the first time in her life she was going to a dance without Hugh. She wouldn't have gone at all, except that she wanted to see him.

He did come over and dance with her. The change in him was noticeable at once. His eyes lacked their sparkle, and were lightly shadowed. But his eyes and his whole manner had a different sparkle, a feverishness.

"Did you see the game, honey?"

She sensed a worry in his voice. He wanted to be encouraged; he was aware of his mediocre playing.

"Yes," she said. "Good game."

"Not so overwhelming as last year." He laughed self-consciously.

She pitied his childish desire to be reassured, but she wanted to be firm.

"No," she replied. "You were tired."

He frowned. "That's what the coach said. I don't know where you get that stuff. I'm all right."

"You can't stay up all hours, Hugh, and expect to be in top form."

"If you're going to preach—" he grumbled.

"I'm not preaching. I'm only giving you facts."

Some one cut in then, and Hugh stalked off without another word. During the rest of the evening he didn't come near her. Her dance was ruined.

AS the season wore on, it became more apparent that Captain Flash Farron was not up to last year's form. And everywhere Doris heard ugly rumors which explained his falling off.

At the games the whole stadium could feel the difference. His strong, lithe figure lacked his usual superb rhythm of motion, that blending of speed and power so beautiful to watch.

You could see him stop more easily when he was tackled. Instead of fighting on for a few more feet, with several tacklers clinging to him, he col-

lapsed at the first sure blow. Sometimes he was slow in rising.

His own defensive work was slumping, too. No longer did he cut a runner down with a clean hard tackle which drew cheers from the crowd.

Not once during the season had he galloped down the field in one of the spectacular end runs which brought the grand stand to its feet.

Doris watched his performances with heart of lead. She rarely saw him now. She knew he was avoiding her. Since the night of the dance he feared her lectures. Sometimes at dances he did dance with her, but he avoided any conversation.

Sally Talbot was supplied with rumors of his gay night life with Muriel Stanton. He was seen at the Marcross Hotel Roof Garden, at the Country Club informals, and frequently at Holland's Inn.

Holland's was a road house of questionable repute, but it had become a fad with the college students and some of the smart set of girls. There was always a strange mixture of people gathered.

Doris was being asked frequently to the dances to which she had formerly been taken by Hugh. At first she couldn't understand it, because she knew those youths did not consider her as one of them. Then she understood.

The men would say: "You oughtn't to let this out-of-town lady steal Flash away from you."

Or: "If you don't look after Flash, Marcross 'll need a new captain."

And when these hints failed to take effect, they grew more pointed: "Doris, why don't you do something about Flash?"

And: "You're the only person in Marcross who can save Hugh. Put him wise to himself."

Still Doris did nothing. She was helpless because she hardly saw him.

THE Marcross younger set got the idea Doris was deliberately refusing to approach Hugh. It was after the Holbert game that the girls of this set made advances to Doris. Even with its cause, she was given a certain thrill in being sought out.

She was sitting on the front porch, wrapped in a heavy coat, when Grace Lancaster drove up in her smart car.

"Doris," said Grace in her most charming voice, "it looks as though you're going to be the most indispensable member of our set."

Doris hadn't realized she was in the set, and she wanted to say so. But she replied:

"How flattering!"

"We feel," Grace explained, "that the fate of Marcross is in your hands, and we want you to come to my tea dance to-morrow afternoon and talk it over."

Doris wanted to tell her that she was mistaken; she had nothing to do with the fate of Marcross. But a little power, after the years of toleration, was too sweet.

"I'd love to," she said.

"Fine. You know," Grace went on, "after the Holbert game we realized the situation was desperate. You know that measly one point by which we won the game was doubly lucky, because the touchdown came from a fumble. Hugh played like a wooden Indian."

"He was surely below par," Doris admitted.

"And did you notice that Stanton girl? She looked as though she was having the time of her life, no matter who was winning."

"She looked beautiful," Doris said meditatively.

"As though she were at a fashion show. Well, I must dash along. I'll expect you to-morrow at four."

Doris remained shivering on the porch, brooding over that phrase: "She was having the time of her life, no matter who was winning."

She remembered the remarks of the boys with Sally and her at the game. "That Stanton girl doesn't seem to care whether Flash plays a good game or not."

"Why should she," the other boy replied, "when she does everything she can to keep him from it."

The mean suspicion in Doris's mind almost shamed her. It was incredible. Yet it would not leave her mind. Suppose Muriel Stanton was doing everything she could to keep Hugh from playing well—why should she?

DORIS was still brooding over this at the tea next day. She wore a lovely powder blue organdie tea gown, which she bought for the occasion. She got permission to leave the office early.

The genuine exclamations of admiration told Doris that she did look well, the delicate shade of the dress blending with her fresh coloring and rich brown hair.

The girls were very serious about Hugh Farron being saved for Marcross. It was horrible to them that an interloper could ruin the school's chances by her selfish vanity. Doris thought of voicing her suspicion.

But the girls soon showed they expected a lot of Doris, and she decided it would be unwise to let them know that a vague suspicion was all she had to work on. It was very pleasant being a part of this crowd, even though her acceptance had come about through what they thought was her advantage to them.

When she left Doris decided that she had to save Hugh for Marcross. There were many little reasons that urged her. For the one overwhelming reason of her love, she could not try to win him away from a girl he chose. But here was a chance to win for herself an assured place in the younger set and at the same time bring Hugh to his senses.

No personal pride could have made Doris consider the advantage of a position in that set. But she felt that Hugh might look upon her more as a woman of the world if she did not depend on him for her position.

Then, even though she would get no such reward, she wanted Hugh to make the most of himself. This was his last year, and if he left college with his final football year a failure he would always regret it.

This incentive supplied by the girls was what she needed to make her throw aside her reluctance to mingle in his affairs.

The next time Sally asked her if she wanted her date to bring along a boy for her, Doris said yes.

They went to the Marcross Hotel Roof Garden. When that closed at midnight, the boys suggested Holland's Inn. Doris had been hoping they would suggest that, and she readily agreed.

The place was just about what she thought it would be. Long, narrow, and smoky; booths with tables along the walls; an orchestra at one end and a bar at the other. A large dance floor was in the center, with small tables around it.

It was crowded, and the crowd was noisy and hilarious. Some of the men

looked like gangsters, and some of the women were the kind Doris had been taught not to speak to.

Sally said: "At last you're going to see the gay night life of Marcross."

"I feel like your country cousin," Doris said, forcing herself to be gay.

She had seen Hugh with Muriel Stanton in a corner booth. He saw no one but Muriel.

"Will you drink?" the boys asked.

"No, thanks," Doris said. "But don't let me stop you."

That was part of her plan.

"We won't."

They produced pint bottles of corn whisky, still white.

The grand stand went wild over the Marcross captain

AT each dance Doris was one of the first on the floor, but Hugh didn't dance. Along toward two o'clock she saw him coming on the floor with Muriel Stanton. Her heart beat faster, her breath tightened.

The orchestra blared into barbaric jazz, and Doris's partner, feeling the effects of his corn, abandoned himself to frenzied gyrations, which he accompanied by yelps of glee and bursts of song. The whole crowd had reached the same stage, and the place was a bedlam.

Doris forced herself to appear to be enjoying it. She threw her full-rounded young body into the rhythm of the dance, curved her scarlet mouth in arch laughter. In the midst of the dance she felt a heavy hand on her shoulder. She spun around, her eyes lowered invitingly, her lips smiling roguishly.

Hugh, one arm around Muriel, was gazing sternly at her.

"Ah," she murmured, "my old pal, Flash—Flash-in-the-pan!"

"Doris," he said sternly. "What are you doing here?"

"She's with me," blubbered her partner.

Hugh ignored him.

Doris said gayly: "The same thing you are—burning the candle at both ends."

Muriel cleared her throat impatiently. Hugh was scowling, his eyes staring into Doris's. She felt a little quaver, but held her ground. She noticed his eyes glowed feverishly and the shadows had deepened into dark circles.

"Come over here a minute," he demanded.

He dragged her by one arm, led Muriel by the other, to the side of the floor. Doris's partner followed pro-

testingly. Muriel lifted her head in haughty anger.

"Pardon me a minute, Muriel," Hugh said. He turned his back to the floor and faced Doris. "Now look here, you can't pull this kind of stuff. You ask this souse"—indicating her partner—"to take you home at once."

Doris melted under the authority in his voice. But she wouldn't give in. She stiffened her purpose and retorted flippantly:

"*You* should tell *me* to go home!"

"It doesn't matter what I do. I can take care of myself."

"Sure, your playing Saturday showed that."

Hugh winced. "If you're going to start on that—"

"I'm not starting on anything. As a matter of fact, you're keeping me from dancing, and my partner is getting restless."

HUGH was growing angry, he started to turn away. But something held him. He said grimly:

"Don't worry about me and my playing. That's not important. But you're a little kid. You have no mother, and your father is a nice old codger, but doesn't know what it's all about. You need some one to put you wise to yourself. Now do what I tell you and go home."

"It's so sweet to have a big brother—" Doris faltered, this line was hard for her. Nevertheless, she forced a gay smile and went on: "But I could care more for it if he took care of himself."

"I tell you my playing is not important."

"Who said so?"

He was silent for a minute, glowering. Then he said: "It 'll never mean anything to me after I'm out of college!"

"No. Only that you've failed at something, crawled out of an obligation. Do you think the men elected you captain because they thought you were a social light?"

Doris rose to her feet. "Farron! Farron! Farron!" she chanted with the frenzied throng

Hugh felt that.

"Look here," he said, "if I cut this out until the end of the season, will you go home?"

She felt like crying "Oh, Hugh!" but the supercilious look on Muriel Stanton's face repressed it.

"I don't see what it has to do with me," she said frivolously.

"Your behavior is important to me, that's why."

"And you think yours is to me," she said.

Hugh stared at her, bewildered. "I thought . . ."

"Yes, you thought," she replied sharply. "I'll tell you this: it's important to me what the team does, and you're responsible for them. If you leave to-night at the same time I do, and don't come back until the season's over, I'll give up my night life, too."

He thrust out his bronzed hand. "It's a bargain."

"Yes."

She turned quickly away. She could face him no longer.

"Come on," she called to her partner, who was ready to begin dancing all over again.

She almost staggered to the table. It was all she could do to keep back the tears. It was terrible, the whole thing. Her trick had worked, but where was she?

When she finally got away from her friends she rushed to her room and gave way to the tears. She had won him for Marcross, but she had lost him for herself. Brother, pal, sister, that's what he considered their relations.

And in that handclasp she had put her seal on it. Put her seal on a friendly relation when she longed for him to take her in his arms and kiss her!

DORIS and the rooters saw an improved Farron in the game with Warster. He wasn't up to his top form, but he was fighting hard, and in there with spirit. Several times he broke clear for long runs and Marcross won by a safe touchdown.

The crowd was jubilant at the dance Saturday night. It was pleasant to Doris to feel she had a part in the victory, and her new friends did not forget it. She had the exhilaration of being one of them. When Hugh came over to dance with her, she met him with her old confidence.

"What's the matter, Hugh? You look sunk—and that on top of a great game."

"Great game," he said bitterly. "That's what I am to everybody—a football machine."

"You used to enjoy your games." Doris felt a mingled pain, half hope.

"Yes. Now I'm giving up something that means more."

"Miss Stanton?"

"And all she stands for. She sees more in life than a fellow being a campus god. What does it get me? There'll be another one to-morrow."

"She's showing you the higher things," Doris said with forced sarcasm. "How to be the god of Holland's Inn."

"That's all you see in it. Holland's just happens to be the only place in Marcross. I'm learning things about smartness that 'll be more valuable to me than being a football hero ever will."

"Well, you'll only have to be a hero another week.

"You mean," Doris asked suddenly, "if you don't take her around, she'll let you out?"

"Oh, not in that way. But she's not the kind who wants to sit in the Pollard's parlor and have me watch the clock."

"I didn't see her at the game today," Doris said. "She must be sore."

"She left town this morning for the week-end."

"That's why you're so sad."

Doris was finding it almost impossible to keep pretending this light manner, she thought the tears would come

any minute, her voice was on the verge of trembling.

Some one cut in then, and Hugh moved over to the stag line. Doris saw him standing there, disconsolate, indifferent to the congratulations. Doris did some fast thinking. When Ward Bentley cut in on her, she said:

"Ward, take me outside, I want to talk to you."

"What 've I done to rate this honor?"

"It's not what you've done, but what you're going to do. Tell me, what do you know about this Stanton girl?"

"Nothing—except she's visiting the Pollards, and you know how well I know them."

FRANCES POLLARD and her brother Harry were of the older set; they moved in the young matron country club group. Frances was engaged to an older man, and was rarely seen at the dances Doris frequented. Harry came to them occasionally, when there was nothing else to do.

"I'd give something like my right arm to meet Harry Pollard when he's drunk."

Ward was silent for a minute.

"He goes to Holland's occasionally. The next time I hear of him going there I'll take you."

It was Thursday night when Ward called Doris and told her to get ready to meet Harry Pollard. It was two days before the last game of the season, with Crofton, their ancient rivals. Doris wore her new evening gown, burnt orange with a tight bodice and long flowing dress. Ward Bentley, who had been knowing her since high school, gave a gasp of admiration.

"You're a dream," he said.

"I hope I'm a pleasant one to Harry Pollard," she laughed.

Harry was well in his cups when Ward leaned over him.

"Harry," he whispered, "I'm with a little girl you ought to know."

Harry, ever alert for new girls, and asking no questions in his condition, promptly excused himself and ambled over to Doris's table. She saw by the light in his eyes that she attracted him. The music started and he asked her to dance.

"I've seen you before," he murmured, and he stumbled around the floor. "But you were always with some guy—who was it?"

"I guess you mean Hugh Farron."

"Oh, yeh. Flash. Now he's sort of ga-ga over Muriel, I guess you're on the make."

"Well, I could hardly hope to compete with her."

"Kill that idea," he said fervently. "Muriel's another kind. But you—"

"Where is she from, exactly?" Doris asked quickly.

"She's from Fort Norfolk."

"Then," Doris said with simulated flippancy, "how could she leave Marcross over the week-end for *that* place?"

"She didn't. She went to the Crofton-Buford game in Buford. Now let's talk about you."

Doris let him talk about her until the dance was over.

"Come on over and join our party," he insisted.

"We'll be over in a little while."

AS soon as he wabbled off she grabbed Ward.

"We're leaving," she said.

As they sped back to town, she asked:

"You know somebody on the sports

department of the *Times-Ledger,* don't you? And they're still working, aren't they? Well, take me there."

A sports reporter was just finishing his copy for the night when they breezed in. With Southern gallantry he said:

"For a beautiful lady like you I'd stay here until I start work to-morrow again."

He didn't have to stay long. Doris looked through the facts on the players of Crofton College and found that "Hinkey" Jordan, star halfback, was from Port Norfolk. That was all Doris wanted to know.

Next afternoon when she arrived home she was startled to see Hugh waiting for her. It was so much like their former times that she trembled violently. When she saw the dark scowl on his face her breath caught.

"What is it, Hugh?"

"I just wanted to tell you I heard about your breaking your promise last night. I know you were at Holland's, dancing with that rotter, Harry Pollard."

"Hugh, I've an explanation for that. I went there—" she faltered.

"Sure, I know," he scoffed. "Well, don't bother to think up a good one. I just want to tell you I'm going to-night. So long."

"Hugh! You can't do that. The night before the game."

"Can't I? Watch me." He plunged down the steps and hurried down the path.

"Hugh—"

He didn't answer. Doris crumpled in a little heap on the top step and sobbed. She had defeated her purpose; she had lost him. Everything would be lost. She dragged herself in the house and poured out her story to Sally.

"Come over here, angel. No. I'll be over there."

Sally breezed in, full of ideas.

"Now, look here," she began, "I've been thinking a lot. If there's something phony about this girl, we'll find it out. Now let's put our heads together and think of a way to discover what it is she's up to and thereby break the spell she seems to have cast over your boy friend."

After a long talk Doris did what she never thought she would do. She got the Pollard house on the phone and asked for Harry.

"You don't know who this is," she said in a cooing voice.

"From your sweet voice I'm darned anxious to find out."

"I'm the girl you met last night at Holland's."

"Oh, you naughty one. You didn't come back."

"No, my boy friend got jealous. But I'd like to go there to-night if you want to."

"If I want to—say, where can I get you?"

"There's a trick to it. I've a girl friend who wants to go along. She's got a crush on Hinkey Jordan, who got in to-night with the Crofton team. Can you get him?"

"If I have to gag him, I'll bring him."

When she turned from the phone, Sally said:

"How'd you know Jordan would fall for that?"

"I learned last night that they had a hard time keeping him in training. The girl he was engaged to had to leave town, so he'd have no temptations."

"And the girl—" Sally was breathless.

"They didn't know her name, but

I have her doped out as our Stanton friend."

HINKEY JORDAN was typical halfback of the rugged variety, broad shoulders, deep-chested, with heavy neck and rough-hewn face. He was not a bad-looking fellow, and had a jovial grin.

The party was unpleasant for both the girls. Harry thought Doris must be crazy about him, and she couldn't offend him so early in the evening.

It looked like a gay, drunken party when Hugh Farron and Muriel Stanton entered. When Muriel saw Hinkey Jordan, she stopped dead in her tracks. Her face went bloodless. Only her eyes, those green, haughty eyes, seemed to leap alive with venom.

"Hinkey!"

The one word of scorn was enough. He leaped to his feet, half knocking over the table.

"Muriel. Gee—I just got here." He was apologetic.

"The night before the game," she said coldly, forgetting the others.

Hugh stood behind her, bewildered, looking from one to the others.

"I wasn't going to stay late," Hinkey murmured childishly.

"How'd you happen to come, anyway. Been in town five hours and you find the worst dump here."

Doris cut in coolly: "I found him, Miss Stanton. Just as you found Hugh."

"What can you possibly mean?" The words were icily contemptuous.

"I thought, as long as you were so nice about showing my boy friend around the night before the game, I'd do the same for yours."

Hinkey whirled on Doris. Harry Pollard was staring with glassy eyes, unable to comprehend what was happening. Doris looked over Harry's head and met the angry gaze of Hinkey Jordan.

Then Muriel's words cut like a knife:

"So you're the brand of cat they grow in hick towns. Thought you'd revenge yourself on me for stealing your man. Well, I don't want him. I was only amusing myself until the end of the season. Come on, Hinkey, you're going back to your hotel."

Hinkey stumbled clear of the booth, looking sullen and belligerent.

Muriel drew her handsome evening wrap tightly around her and turned to leave.

"JUST a minute." Hugh spoke for the first time. They paused, and Muriel looked at him scornfully, Hinkey glaring. "Is this man Jordan of Crofton?"

"Yeh, I'm Jordan. Who are you?"

"Farron."

"Come on, Hinkey." Muriel's imperious manner did not hide her nervousness.

Hugh said: "So you're her boy friend?"

"We've been engaged for three years, if it's any of your business."

"It's my business this far," Hugh said grimly. He looked past him to Muriel. "So this is why you wanted to keep me out, especially the night before the game."

Muriel merely looked through him. "Will you come, Hinkey?"

Hinkey snapped at Hugh: "Don't talk like that, fellow. She had to run around with somebody in this dump, and she picked you. Don't you like it?"

"I don't like it at all."

"Then what 're you going to do about it?" Hinkey snarled.

"Anything you want. But I'm not running, see."

Muriel said with a mirthless laugh: "You wouldn't be to-morrow if Hinkey hadn't shown up." She grabbed Hinkey's arm. "Don't be a child. Come on."

"We'll settle it to-morrow at the game," Hinkey said threateningly.

Hugh didn't answer. He turned to Doris.

"Now what's all this? How do you happen to be mixed up?"

"I'm not mixed up. I'm just having a nice party spoiled."

"Yeah. Well, you're going home now, so you won't be spoiled any more. On the way you tell me what it's all about."

"I'll tell you after the game. To-night you go to bed with a clear head and get lots of sleep."

BUT after the game Hugh didn't want to talk. He just wanted to get Doris alone. He had risen to the great heights of which he was capable. He had shaken himself free twice for spectacular long runs that the crowds had been waiting for all season.

The grand stand went wild over the Marcross captain. Doris rose to her feet. "Farron! Farron! Farron!" she chanted with the frenzied throng.

And Jordan, the Crofton ace—Flash Farron had stopped him every time before he got started.

Hugh was bubbling over with happiness.

There was no feverishness in his eyes. They shone as they used to.

"Doris, honey," he said. "Sometimes it takes a lot to wake a fellow up. I hope it didn't take so much that it's too late."

"Darling!" she murmured.

He noticed that her provocative mouth was uplifted to his, and then he couldn't see her mouth any more. He was looking into the softest, dreamiest eyes he had ever seen.

"Gee, I love you so!" he said every few minutes.

Compensation

LIFE may rob me if it will,
Yet I will happy be—
Life cannot steal remembrance of
The kiss you gave to me!

—Winifred Virginia Jackson

As she brushed back the dark brown hair, a low cry of recognition came from her lips

Deserted

The altar—where girlhood dreams come true, but where Celia found—

By Maud McCurdy Welsh

EVERY day Celia saw him pass the big wide window of her little hat shop on Halsted Street. Nearly always he came at the same hour, between nine and nine fifteen. People of every nationality and age were constantly passing Celia's wide window. Grizzly old men in jumper suits, going to their work in the big textile mills a few blocks away. Young men in blazers. Young girls with vividly painted lips, who worked in near-by factories or in the cheaper department stores.

Every morning Celia went to the window and stood behind the cretonne curtains until he had passed. She had a curious feeling as if at that moment the very world stood still. Even the cheap, nickel-plated alarm clock seemed to pause in its mad reckoning of time.

And then all too soon he would pass, and she would again face her narrow

world behind the cretonne curtains. The clock would be ticking as indifferently as ever, and all the hats would be standing up in stiff, straight rows as if they were almost frowning in disapproval.

Often Celia told herself she was doing a very silly, schoolgirlish thing. But she never failed to go to the window at the time when she knew he would be passing. Somehow she was drawn there irresistibly.

And then one day he came, but not alone. A modishly dressed, slender girl was walking by his side. A girl with laughing blue eyes and reddish-blond hair which hung in adorable little curls around the side of her tight-fitting helmet. He was looking down at her with a smile that was caressing, almost possessive.

Of course, they were lovers. Celia felt sure of that. And somehow half the joy of watching for him was gone, though she still never failed to go to the window.

Not for worlds would Celia have Maisie know that every morning she stood behind the curtains, waiting a little breathlessly for a glimpse of a young man whom she did not know and probably never would know.

Maisie was the girl who came in the afternoons to help out when business was brisk. She was pert-lipped and blond, secure in her conviction that she was one of "the preferred." She patronized Celia and was quite frank about it.

Once she had said quite condescendingly:

"You'll never be a Cleopatra or a Du Barry, kid. You're not the type to attract men. So you'd better make up your mind to grab off the first boy that makes a noise like a proposal."

"Ye-ah?" Celia drawled laughingly. "Maybe I'd better do the proposing myself."

BUT the truth was, Maisie's words cut rather deep. Celia had never been in love, unless—unless—but how could she love a man whom she really did not know? And yet, just the mere knowledge that *he* was in the world, that she could see him each morning, lent magic to her days. Seemed to make the whole world a happier place.

He was so dear, so infinitely attractive.

Once while passing he had stopped suddenly to light a cigarette right in front of where she stood behind the curtains, and in that moment she had looked searchingly into his face. He had a pair of soft brown eyes in which lurked gayety—as if he had found the world a most amusing place. His face was bronzed and narrow. Underneath the edge of his natty felt hat she could distinguish the color of his hair, which was brown also, cut short and neatly close to his temples.

He was different from anybody Celia had ever seen. So immaculately clad, so slimly arrogant, so boyishly debonair.

Sometimes it seemed as if she lived only for that brief moment in the mornings when he passed by. But Celia guarded her secret well. Maisie never once suspected, nor did Papa or Mamma Stella, who lived upstairs over Celia's little shop and watched over the girl as well as they did their own noisy brood of five.

In fact, it was sometimes hard to tell Celia from the little Stella girls, they were so much alike in coloring. She had the same dusky curls, the same wide-open dark eyes and slight figure. But the truth was, though she did not

look it, Celia was twenty, and she had made her living in the little hat shop since she was seventeen, at which time her widowed mother had died, leaving the shop as her only heritage.

There were times when it took careful scrimping and all kinds of small economies to keep it going. Celia had always been such a businesslike person, no one had ever suspected she would do such a foolish thing as to fall in love with a handsome stranger or that such a man could ever enter her life. Therefore it was all the more amazing when the astonishing thing happened!

CELIA had had a busy day and had just gone to her little bedroom at the back of the shop, to finish up the trivial tasks that must always be done before retiring.

At about ten thirty a loud knocking at the door of the shop startled her almost into dropping her hairbrush. She opened the door wonderingly. Two men stood outside holding between them a limp figure. Without waiting they pushed past her into the bedroom and laid him on the bed. One of them said gruffly:

"This man has had an—accident. This was the nearest place. Do you mind if we leave him here until the doctor comes?"

Then they were gone.

For a moment Celia gazed panic-stricken at the bloodstained figure on the bed; then she went quickly into action, bringing hot water and towels from the kitchen and bathing the man's face very gently.

As she brushed back the dark brown hair from his temples a low cry of recognition came from her lips. She knew that narrow, bronzed face, with its perfectly chiseled features. It was the young man who had passed her window daily for so many months. What had happened to him?

At that moment there was another knock. A doctor came in. It seemed ages to Celia before he finished bandaging the man's head and putting his injured leg in a splint. At last he was t h r o u g h, and was looking at her through bushy eyebrows.

"Ahem! Your husband?"

The girl shook her head.

"Who is he, then? Who directed me here?"

Briefly she explained the circumstances, and he shrugged.

"A gangster, I suppose. Probably took him for a ride and then got cold feet."

"Oh, but I'm sure he isn't!" Celia protested.

The doctor shrugged again.

"Well, it's none of my business, after all. But I suppose you know it would be almost fatal to move him right now. There's a n a s t y scalp wound, to say nothing of a badly fractured leg."

His eyes swept over her questioningly.

"I can take care of him as long as necessary," she assured him firmly.

Promising to return in the morning, the doctor left. Celia took her seat at the head of the bed. In the morning she would ask Mamma and Papa Stella to take charge, but until then she would watch over him herself. His breathing seemed more regular now, but he looked very white. One of his hands lay listlessly outside the cover, a slender hand with manicured nails.

FOR hours she sat by the bed. Now and then his lips moved in a groan, but he seemed to be in a heavy stupor. Once his eyes opened suddenly, and a single word came from

his lips: "Fleurette!" A half smile flitted across his face. His eyes closed again.

Toward morning Celia dozed lightly in her chair, and awakened with a jerk to find her patient propping himself up by one arm, looking at her bewilderedly.

"Hullo! Who're you? How'd I happen to be here?"

She explained carefully. When she finished, the puzzled light remained in his eyes.

"But I—I don't seem to know the chaps. Queer, isn't it?"

"They'll probably return to-day," she answered soothingly. "How about some breakfast?"

"I could do with coffee and cigarettes, if you'll be so kind."

She jumped up briskly. "Plenty across the street."

"Wait." He called her back and began fumbling around in his clothes. A dark flush crossed his face. "I say, what am I doing in these—these things?"

"I don't know," Celia faltered unhappily. He was dressed in the rough clothes of a working man—he who had been so immaculately clad, who had walked along so jauntily, swinging a cane.

"Never mind the cigarettes," he said almost brusquely; but Celia had already gone.

When she returned later with an appetizing tray from the kitchenette and the cigarettes, he greeted her with a smile.

"Maybe, after all, I died and went to heaven."

She laughed.

"You'll more likely think it's the other place when the Stella kids wake up and start pillow fighting, upstairs."

"But I insist it's heaven!" he went on whimsically. "Coffee like mother used to make; flaky biscuit like nobody ever made before; old-fashioned marmalade and eggs served by an angel in a blue print dress. I tell you, home was never anything like this."

All at once his expression changed. "Home!" he repeated. "I suppose I've got one."

For a moment there was tense silence, then his voice came again, this time very low.

"Funny thing—I can't seem to remember who I am!"

A quick look of sympathy and alarm sprang into Celia's face. But her voice came soothingly.

"It's all right. No use worrying. It will all come back soon."

LATER, in answer to Celia's summons, Papa Stella bustled down the steps and took charge of the situation. The invalid was fitted out in some of the good-hearted man's clothes, with the help of buxom Mamma Stella, and it was arranged that she and Celia should take care of him during the day, with Papa Stella to do what was necessary at night. In the meantime Celia could room with little Josie Stella upstairs.

The doctor found the arrangements very satisfactory. After his call that morning he inquired abruptly of Celia: "What's his name?"

Celia flushed.

"He has—has forgotten," she faltered.

The doctor gave one of his characteristic shrugs.

"Sometimes it's convenient to forget."

Celia hotly resented the insinuation, but made no response. Whoever her guest might be, he was everything

a real man should be. The girl would have staked her very life on the faith she had in him.

She knew now that she loved him. When she had stood behind the curtains and watched him pass by, she had adored him from afar. But now that he was here, stricken, and confused as to his own identity, her heart had suddenly awakened to a deep, protecting love.

She ministered to him as tenderly, yearningly as a mother might—but she dared not meet his eyes, lest he read her carefully guarded secret, lest he see the tremulous throbbing of her heart underneath the plain print dress she wore. Just one direct glance into his eyes stirred her pulse to a quivering ecstasy.

She was a little frightened at the tremendous force of her love. He would always be the only man in the world for her. She would cherish him to the very end of her days.

But by and by he would get well and he would go away—and he would never know.

MAISIE was intensely interested and curious.

"Kid, he looks like class, if you ask me," she told Celia late one afternoon when she was leaving. "Better watch the papers closely. There'll be news. He's from the Gold Coast, if I don't miss my guess."

Celia did read the papers carefully, but there was nothing she could connect in any way with the invalid. One item worried her a little, although nothing on earth could have induced her to admit it had any reference to him. The item read:

Gentleman Joe Vickers, alias Tierney, the gangster who wounded Patrolman Osborne during a street fight, is believed to be wounded and hiding in the down town section of this city.

Celia read the paragraph with wide, startled eyes. For a moment she was conscious of a feeling of panic, then she relaxed with a smile. It was absolutely impossible. It could be only the merest kind of a coincidence, she told herself confidently.

And so the days glided by, and after two weeks the invalid was able to sit up in a chair, both Mamma Stella and Celia helping him as he hopped to it on one foot.

The mornings were the happiest times of all, with cheery Mamma Stella bustling in and out with delicacies, and little Josie and Maria Stella sitting with him in the back room while Celia was busy in the shop.

The convalescent certainly did not lack attention. Sometimes he and Celia would laugh together and talk, telling jokes, and he would insist on helping with the cooking, peeling potatoes with awkward fingers, and sometimes spilling the whole business out on the floor. He'd even taken on the small job of threading needles for Celia's clever, busy fingers.

"Got to earn my board and keep," he would say with a shadowy half-smile. "Whenever this confounded leg of mine gets well I'll be able to go out and make the money to pay you back. You've been so—so wonderful to me."

"Please don't think of—of paying me back. I've loved doing things for you," she insisted shyly.

His eyes met hers for a moment and lingered almost caressingly.

"You'd love to do things for anybody, Celia. It's part of your nature."

But in the afternoons when Maisie came, things were different. Maisie calmly appropriated him, paid him dar-

ing compliments, and almost made love to him. And there was no use disputing it, Maisie *did* have a way with her.

Often Celia was filled with jealousy. Maisie was a blonde. Was it true that all men preferred blondes, as Maisie insisted so emphatically?

There were times when Celia was afraid she was beginning to hate her. Sometimes when she watched them together, Maisie with her chair drawn up close to his, her fairness contrasting with his dark good looks, Celia turned away, sick at heart. She could see that he was always more animated when Maisie was in the shop. She was so full of little airy tricks and saucy slang phrases. It was quite true that she knew how to handle men, as she so often had boasted to Celia.

In her gay, careless way Maisie had given him the name of John Doe—although Celia, for fear of hurting him, had not dared to say anything that might remind him that he had forgotten.

Thereafter he was always John, and he accepted it good-naturedly.

"THERE'S something frightfully romantic about John," Maisie said one day. "I don't mind admitting I'm half in love with him myself."

"You *would* be!" Celia almost muttered under her breath.

It didn't seem fair, she told herself with a little indrawn sob. Maisie could have any man she wanted. She often said so herself.

Celia had never wanted but one in her whole life. Was she going to sit quietly by and let Maisie take him? And yet what could she do? She had no beauty nor wit to match against Maisie's insidious charms.

But something in her heart cried out fiercely that Maisie should not have him.

A few days after John was able to sit up for the first time, something happened that gave Celia quite a shock. Maisie was standing outside the big window on the sidewalk getting ready to go home for the afternoon, and she motioned Celia to walk up the street with her.

About a block away, she stopped and showed Celia where a man stood across the street from the little shop, with his eyes fastened intently on the big window. It was as if he were watching for some one to come out. Sudden cold chills ran over Celia's body as Maisie whispered:

"If that isn't a plainclothes man, then I'm the Queen of Sheba. Do you suppose he's after John?"

Terror clutched at Celia's heart. There was no doubt but that this man had his eyes glued on the window of her shop. Was he watching for John? Would he see her guest—and what then?

The next day John was again sitting at the window, but Celia had been careful to have his chair pulled to one side, so that cretonne curtains hid the view of him from the street.

Mamma Stella had just gone upstairs to give her noisy young brood their dinner, and for a few minutes Celia was alone with John.

There was a look in his eyes that the girl did not understand—a look of wistfulness, half sorrow.

She turned the shade of the bridge lamp away from his face, and asked anxiously:

"Aren't you feeling as well as usual, John? Is there anything I can do?"

He smiled. He did not even meet her eyes.

"The trouble is, Celia, I'm feeling

too well. In a few days I—I shall have to leave. I ought to be glad at relieving you and Mamma Stella of such a burden, but the truth is, it isn't going to be easy to say good-by."

"You haven't been a burden at all," she contradicted gently. "It has been wonderful to—to be able to help you."

"Sometimes I believe you mean that," he said with a slow smile.

"You love—*me?*" Her voice was like a sob.

"How could I help it? I couldn't go on seeing you day after day without recognizing the sweetness of your nature. Without wanting you, dear. It would have been impossible. Why, Celia, child, the only kind of girls I've known are the kind who demand everything and give nothing—not even a loyal friendship. But you are different—so sweet and young and unselfish. How could I help loving you?

He hobbled toward the door, seemingly unaware of the agonizing little figure that was Celia

For a moment there was silence. Celia could not answer because of the emotion that almost stifled her. Then John said abruptly:

"I suppose you know I'm in love with you."

Her heart almost rose up in her throat at his words.

Though I know I've no earthly right to tell you," he added in a low voice.

SHE sat down very quietly in the chair beside him, and met his eyes shyly and yet bravely. "It seems too wonderful to be true—that you should love me. I wanted you to love me. I prayed and hoped that you would, but I thought Maisie—"

He suddenly reached for her hands with an exultant laugh.

"Did you actually believe I could see Maisie when *you* were around?"

Then he dropped her hand and turned away.

"But it's idiotic of me to tell you. I decided I never would. I've tried not to look at you, for fear you might realize the truth. You must not take me seriously, dear. I'm a man with no past, and a very uncertain future. I have no idea even how to go about getting a job. I seem to have been a very useless sort of person."

"I need a combined business manager and handy man," said Celia with a shaky little laugh.

She was rewarded with a smile; then the cloud settled back on his face.

"If I had anything in the world to offer you, I would ask you to be my wife. But I have no right. I have nothing, not even a name."

She raised her eyes to his.

"But isn't love enough? I should ask nothing more."

"How like you to say that! You are the least exacting of women. But, my dear, I couldn't let you sacrifice yourself. If I were established, if I even had a good position—"

His voice trailed off moodily.

"Please believe it does not matter," Celia's voice came pleadingly. "Nothing really counts but love."

"Then, you would be willing to take a chance and marry me, regardless of —everything? Oh, Celia, my little love, you mustn't tempt me! It's been heaven here with you, and all the little Stella kids running in and out, amusing me with their cute antics, and all the hundred and one kindnesses you and Papa and Mamma Stella have showered upon me. I've loved it all. It has seemed so much like home. I think all my life I—I must have been lonely. And I've learned to love you so much. You are my whole life."

"And you are mine," she said simply, her eyes shining through tears.

"Darling, I haven't even a name to offer you."

"I will accept any you choose to give me," her answer came proudly.

With the gasp of a man whose last restraint is broken, John clasped her hungrily in his arms.

"It's too overwhelming—my love for you. I can't fight against it any longer."

For the first time in her life Celia knew the exquisite joy of nestling in the arms of a lover, of his rapturous yet gentle kisses.

John loved her! Even now it was difficult to believe it—so wonderful it seemed. To love and to be loved—it was the sum and total of one's whole existence. Nothing else mattered in the whole world.

MAISIE pretended to be shocked when Celia told her that she and John were making plans for their wedding.

"You little nitwit! Are you actually going to marry a man of whom you know nothing? Why, for all you know, he may be a crook or a gangster. What about that plainclothes man that was hanging around here? You'd better watch your step, kid."

"I'm not afraid. He's everything that's clean and honorable and fine," Celia answered proudly. "I couldn't love him unless he were."

Since John had been able to walk with the aid of a crutch, he had been occupying Mamma Stella's spare room upstairs. Up in her living room, John, Celia and Mamma Stella made plans for the wedding.

The ceremony was to be performed there, and Mamma Stella volunteered to make the wedding cake. Little Josie was to scatter rose leaves before the path of the bride, while Maisie was to attend in a dress of delicate pink. Maisie had forgotten her scruples and was busy helping with Celia's wedding gown, which was to be a simple thing of white georgette and lace.

The days simply raced by, with everybody taking a hand. Celia in her great happiness had forgotten the sinister presence of the plainclothes man across the street. She had forgotten everything but that to-morrow she and the man she adored would be married and would never again know the pain of separation.

Glancing through an afternoon paper, the bride-to-be received a sudden jolt. On the front page was pictured a laughing-eyed girl with lovely hair curling around the edges of a smart little hat.

Celia's fingers shook as she held the paper. Underneath was printed:

> MISS FLEURETTE GORDON, 22 WAVERLY PLACE, ONE OF THE SEASON'S DÉBUTANTES, WHO RETURNS TO-DAY FROM PARIS.

There was no mistaking the face. Besides, there was the name Fleurette. It was the same girl who had walked so gayly at John's side! The girl he had called for in his delirium!

Celia turned piteously pale. Here was a person who would know John's identity. But was she not also his sweetheart? Had they not been in love?

If she were to show John this newspaper photograph, what might happen? Could she send him back to her to learn his identity and take a chance on losing him forever?

She suddenly crushed the paper into a ball, hiding it behind the cabinet in the kitchenette. She couldn't do it. This girl had belonged to John's past. But his future was hers. She could do nothing that would jeopardize his love. If he should remember Fleurette, he might recall also that he had once loved her.

Celia could not show it to him, and yet she knew it was only the right thing to do.

SHE heard the thump-thump of his crutches. He was coming down the stairs. The next minute he opened the door of the little shop and stood waiting. He took her in his arms and held her to him gently. Celia laid her head against his shoulder, avoiding his eyes.

"Dearest," he chided, "you are pale. All this getting ready to be married has tired you out. You're such a flower-like little thing."

Celia felt as if she were being slowly smothered. She could not speak for a moment, words seemed to choke in her throat.

At last her voice came, passionate in its intensity. "John, are you sure, very sure, that you love me? That—nothing could come between us?"

He drew her closer, kissed the crown of her dark head reverently. "Sweetest, how can you doubt? I adore you. Nothing could come between us ever."

She released herself from his arms and walked firmly into the kitchenette, bringing back the crumpled newspaper. With trembling fingers she held it out to him.

"This is some one you know. I saw you with her once. You called for her when you were delirious. Maybe she can tell you something about your life that you ought to know."

One single word escaped John's lips. "Fleurette!"

For a moment he stared at the picture as if dazed. His words came gropingly, and yet his face lightened.

"Celia—I. It's coming back. I'm remembering. This girl Fleurette—"

His voice broke off suddenly, then rose to a quick, imperative note. "I've got to go. I must hurry."

He hobbled toward the door, seemingly for the moment unaware of the agonizing little figure that was Celia. His hand was on the knob.

For a moment he turned back, smiling.

"Darling, there's something very important. Things have come over me so—so quickly. I've got to go now. But to-morrow! To-morrow, dearest, I'll be back."

He held her in his arms, kissing her with soft, reverent little kisses.

"Until to-morrow, dearest—"

That evening Maisie came to finish a bit of sewing. When she heard the news she was openly skeptical.

"If he's rich, and that's what I've thought all the time, no use looking for him back. That kind of man marries in his own class, or not at all."

Celia forced a smile of confidence, but the word "Fleurette" was dancing menacingly before her eyes. The sight of that girl's pictured face had awakened John to some remembrance of his past life. Did it mean he was obligated to her? Would he come back as he had promised?

THE next day dawned clear and beautiful. Celia's wedding day! Never had the sun shone so beneficently. The hours fairly raced by. There were so many last-minute things to do. At last it was almost the hour set for the ceremony, three in the afternoon.

A few minutes before, Mamma Stella had bustled down the steps and helped Celia slip into the lovely georgette wedding gown and arranged the wreath of wax lilies-of-the-valley in her dusky hair. Together they went upstairs where the small company were already gathered.

It was all very informal and friendly. Much merriment and laughter. Over in a corner Papa Stella pompously served "punch." And then Mamma Stella's cuckoo clock saucily cuckoo'd the hour of three; and some one said, with a little laugh:

"The bridegroom is late. Guess he's still fixing his tie. Bridegrooms are often as fussy as brides."

There were good-natured laughs and jokes, and the old clock ticked mercilessly on. Now it was quarter past the hour. And then somehow it got to be half past; and Celia felt Maisie's eyes upon her with a sharp question.

Then it was four o'clock, and a few minutes after. Mamma Stella pushed her bulky figure through the guests, and her arm, with its cheap bracelets, went around Celia in a swift protecting gesture. Some of the guests shuffled their feet about, looking puzzled and sympathetic.

In another half hour people were quietly leaving. Mamma Stella still stood with her arm around the shrinking girl.

Maisie came up and said acidly:

"I warned you! Don't say I didn't!"

Then she, too, went mercifully away.

After a time the little white-faced Stella children seemed to fade away, and Celia found herself down in her little room back of the shop, with Mamma Stella taking off the little white satin slippers and lifting off the delicate wedding gown. And then she kissed her and bustled softly away.

For a time Celia sat motionless in the chair by the big window, where so often *he* had sat. With dry, piteously vacant eyes she stared out into the dimly lighted street, seeing nothing.

THE next morning she tenderly folded the white georgette and laid it carefully away in folds of tissue paper, with the little white slippers and the wreath.

There was much work to be done, for which Celia was grateful. Several hats to be remade, which in the preparations for the wedding had allowed to go undone. They must be finished to-day.

Nine o'clock that morning found Celia in her place by the window. She had gone there from force of habit. When she realized what she was doing and where she was standing, the swift, painful color flooded her face. She turned away, but not before the thumping of a crutch outside caught her ear.

It *couldn't* be John! She dared not believe.

BUT the door was thrown suddenly open, and an eager voice cried:

"Celia, Celia, dearest!"

The beloved stranger stood before her, clad in immaculate clothes, even to the gardenia in his buttonhole.

"You have come back? Oh, I *knew* you would!"

His arms were around her now. He was leading her to a chair.

"Darling, it must have been terrible for you. Did you think I had failed you? Just as soon as I walked out on the pavement a detective nabbed me. It seems that the boneheads took me for a gangster known as 'Gentleman Joe.' It has taken me all night and half the day to establish my identity. You see, I was so—so dreadfully muddled myself over the question. But everything has come back now. The picture of Fleurette seemed to awaken something in my brain, and the shock of being arrested did the rest. My father is James E. Bayne, owner of the textile mills down the street."

With his arms around her, Celia heard how he had been set upon by thugs, robbed of everything he had, even his clothing, and had been brought to Celia's shop.

"Now you know the rest," he finished, smiling. "I now have a name to offer you, a real one. How'll you like being Mrs. James Edward Bayne, Jr.? My father is waiting to give us his blessing."

She raised luminous, happy eyes to his, but one more question trembled on her lips.

"Fleurette?"

He laughed and drew her closer.

"She was a girl I knew before I met you, but I never, *never* loved her —as I love you, precious!"

Putting her arms around his neck, Celia drew his face down until she could lay a kiss on his crisp, dark hair. And then she surrendered her mouth, tremulous with expectancy, to firm masculine lips that had become inexpressibly dear to her and utterly satisfying.

The dark eyes of the strange girl looked coldly into her own as she shook her head

A tale of Mardi Gras in old New Orleans and of the flower girl who found a thorn in life's sweetest rose

Heartbreak House

By Rosalee Tree

WANDA WHITE stood at her little flower stall in the lobby of famous old Cartier's Tavern and looked out into the sun-dazzled street. It was the week of Mardi Gras, and New Orleans wore festive garb. The holiday mood was apparent everywhere. Wistfully Wanda sighed.

"Haven't you any orchids?"

The cool voice of a girl made her turn quickly.

Fashionably gowned, beautiful and brunette, with arresting dark eyes and exotic coloring, the girl stood imperiously near the flower jars. She was tall and stately. Perhaps her vivid mouth was selfish and cruel, her eyes shrewd and calculating.

Wanda saw only hauteur, the wonder of the French frock she wore and the sparkling necklace about her white, rounded throat.

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"No, we have no orchids," Wanda replied. "We seldom have any call for them. Would you be interested in violets? We have some fresh, lovely violets."

The dark eyes looked coldly into her own. The stranger shook her head disdainfully.

"I wanted orchids — nothing else. Of course, if you haven't any—"

She walked away, joining a tall, handsome young man who stood impatiently near a foreign motor car.

Wanda recognized Peter Deland, a rising attorney, who often lunched at Cartier's Tavern. Now and then Wanda sold him a *boutonnière.*

Deep in her heart she cherished a dream of Peter Leland. Often, when time lagged dismally, she allowed her fancies to weave an imagined romance, in which young Deland played the rôle of Prince Charming, and she herself was Cinderella.

"He is a handsome boy, eh?"

Old Massenet, who once had charge of the tavern's wine cellars, but who for a decade had been a porter, stood beside Wanda, chuckling.

"Do you mean Mr. Deland?"

"If that's his name. I have watched him," the old man went on. "I have noticed that whenever he buys a flower for his buttonhole he wishes you to arrange it for him. That fine young man is in love with you."

He looked slyly at her.

Hot, quick color stained Wanda's smooth cheeks. Her lips, red as the roses which perfumed the air around her, parted.

Old Massenet chuckled throatily at her look of surprise.

"That is absurd!" Wanda cried softly. "How can you say such things?"

"I am old, and I know love when I see it. You are inexperienced, blind

to it. Some day his kiss will awaken you. I know!"

AMUSEMENT replaced Wanda's astonishment. She laughed. As if the handsome Peter Deland would fall in love with the flower girl at Cartier's Tavern! The flower girl who lived in such poverty with Mother Lobelle, midway down the crooked, dismal length of Marquis Street, in the old French quarter of the city, a section he had probably never seen!

"Henri," Wanda said gently to the old man, "you have been reading too many sentimental books. Don't you understand that a person like Mr. Deland would not be interested in me? Besides, he was waiting for the girl who wanted the orchids. I wonder who she is?"

Massenet laid a finger against his thin, brown cheek.

"I am old and sentimental, eh? I know nothing. Well, my pretty one, I know this much. The girl who wanted the orchids is Diana Courtney, the mistress of Heartbreak House."

Wanda started. How well she knew the story of Heartbreak House!

The exotic Diana had just returned from France, Massenet explained. She was with Peter Deland because the young gentleman had taken over his father's law practice and was now attorney for the estate of her deceased father, Nigel Courtney.

"So *that* is Diana!" Wanda exclaimed.

"Home after these many years," Massenet replied. "Home to live in that old house again. And home," he added craftily, his faded eyes fully upon her, "to lead Peter Deland away from you—*if you're not careful!*"

At twilight Wanda shaped a course toward Marquis Street. She did not have to report at the Tavern until nine o'clock. She walked slowly along, through the blue haze creeping in from the harbor.

A quarter mile distant she came upon the high, rusty iron fence that secluded Heartbreak House from the neighborhood in which it sprawled.

NINETEEN years previous the brilliant, handsome and wealthy Nigel Courtney had brought his bride to the Sycamores, as the place was then called. Superstitious folk had shaken their heads upon hearing of it. They said that some mysterious curse lurked over the property.

Whatever the truth was, the fact remained that Nigel Courtney, after one year of married happiness, had fallen victim to a malady that baffled the cleverest physicians his distracted wife had summoned to his bedside.

Their efforts had proved futile. Seven days after the birth of his daughter, Nigel Courtney had closed his eyes forever. His young widow, with their housekeeper, Mrs. Phelps, had lived on at the Sycamores, going nowhere and seeing no one; living alone with their sorrow.

Then, the following year, Cynthia Courtney quietly passed away one night when the warm springtime of the southlands was dropping a fragrant mantle over the old city of New Orleans.

From that time on the Sycamores had come to be known as Heartbreak House—a place where joy and happiness gave way before the crushing hand of anguish and despair.

Diana Courtney, meanwhile, had grown up under the care of an elderly aunt. The huge Courtney fortune was hers, making the girl as wealthy as any fabled princess. For the past two

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years she had been living in Paris, and on the French Riviera.

COMING upon the entrance gates, Wanda slowed her steps. She had passed them countless times, but not once had they been ajar. Now they were open, and on the gravel were the marks of automobile tires.

Before she realized what she was doing, some indefinable impulse turned Wanda through the gates.

The house itself loomed up through the twilight haze, well back among tall sycamores. Lighter windows were golden oblongs in the tapestry of evening. Wanda's heart quickened its beat as an overpowering curiosity urged her on.

She passed an age-old garden, overgrown and desolate. Birds called through the tall trees. A neglected fountain was graced with the bronze figure of a sea nymph and uncared-for shrubbery, growing in profusion, made a dense wall that effectually shut off a crumbling summerhouse on the far side.

Wanda's imagination stirred. She could visualize Heartbreak House when it had been the Sycamores. This same garden must have echoed to the footsteps and laughter of Nigel Courtney and his lovely bride in that first, happy year.

There by the fountain they had probably lingered, hand in hand, while the breezes sang to them and the moonlight enfolded them closely in its white, starry mantle.

Sadly Wanda turned to retrace her way to the gates.

At the same moment voices from the summerhouse came to her through the tranquil gloom. She recognized the cool, proud voice of the girl who had asked for orchids that afternoon.

"I have a surprise for you, Aunt Phoebe," Diana Courtney was saying. "I have decided to marry."

"Impossible, child!"

"Fallen in love—at sight. With Peter Deland. Imagine, after two years. Aunty, I never wanted anything so badly. I mean to have him if I have to spend all my fortune!"

The other speaker—Diana's elderly aunt—replied in a tone that was patient and tired, the voice of one who had long realized how useless it was to do other than humor her niece's whims.

"Peter Deland? His family is old and honored. You could not make a better match, child."

Wanda walked back to the gates. It was strange. Heartbreak House had been well named. She had visited it surreptitiously and briefly. Already, as she turned into Marquis Street, some of its sadness had touched her. It was living up to tradition!

With a heavy heart and a little pang of yearning deep within her, Wanda reached the tumble-down, shabby building on the first floor of which she had lived with Mother Lobelle for so many years.

THE woman, old and frowsy, had reared Wanda. For that reason the girl felt it more than a duty to provide and care for her now that Mother Lobelle's rheumatism prevented her earning money.

Wanda wished the old woman would not drink so steadily and deeply, though she pardoned her even in that. The pains of sciatica needed dulling, perhaps. And Wanda was ever grateful.

Had it not been for Mother Lobelle, she would have grown to young womanhood in the cheerless confines of the

orphanage from which Mother Lobelle said she had taken her eighteen years previous.

The woman was asleep on her miserable cot in the rear bedroom. Wanda did not disturb her, but set about preparing dinner. While she ate in solitary state, she beheld the tawdry, poverty-blighted place with an ironic glance. In this place all the precious dreams of her girlhood had been born.

How could she have expected any man to love her when she came from such surroundings? She was like a rose lost in a tangle of relentless weeds.

Peter Deland! The handsome boy with the laughing gray eyes, the friendly smile and the buttonhole into which she twined the flowers he purchased!

Wanda looked at herself in the square of mirror over the disconsolate sofa. A rose being crushed by weeds! She saw the soft, tawny wave of her polished hair. She looked at the piquant oval of her face, a creamy sea for the burning red reefs of her curved, tempting lips.

Her eyes were brown with an amber glow in their depths, and her nose was straight, classically molded. She was slim, boyishly lithe; as she looked at herself in the mirror, the cheap, plain black dress with its white collar and cuffs seemed to be replaced by glimmering silks fashioned in the very latest mode.

Impatiently, Wanda shook her head and went on with her hasty meal. Dreams were poor, fragile bubbles, broken by the cold winds of actuality. What use to dream when she was surrounded so completely by the prison of poverty? She had never known a father or mother. Beauty was an illusion, her loveliness an idle, empty gift. No one could fall in love with her—ever!

THE city was dancing to the gay tune of Mardi Gras when Wanda went back to Cartier's Tavern. The streets were crowded under the clear shine of what old Massenet called "a Gulf of Mexico moon."

Floats of the colorful pageant were moving down the street beyond the tavern. Multi-colored confetti and paper streamers lay like snow on the pavements. Music grew loud and retreated, lost in happy laughter. It was a gala time for youth and happiness!

Cartier's was deserted because of the outdoor spectacle. Wanda looked at her flowers with a little shake of her head. No one would buy them tonight. What use to remain indoors when all the city was celebrating? She perched herself on a high stool and stared out through the windows.

Suddenly the tavern door opened and Peter Deland entered. Wanda's heart skipped a beat. He hurried across to her, his gray eyes shining like stars.

"I thought I'd find you here. This won't do," he said with pretended severity. "Close the stall and come with me. We're going to celebrate Mardi Gras!"

Wanda's pulses clamored when she looked up at him.

"I can't get away for another hour."

"Oh, yes you can!" Deland differed. "I spoke to your employer a while ago. It didn't need much to persuade him to let you off. No business on a night like this. So come, hurry!"

A half hour later found Wanda in the thick of the merrymakers. She clung to Deland's arm, a great resolve in her heart. To-night she would be

one of the care-free slaves of pleasure. The spirit of Mardi Gras would keep her mind from such things as she had heard in the garden of Heartbreak House, of her lowly state and the dreams that could never come true.

"Happy, Wanda?"

Deland's voice aroused her.

"It's all wonderful!"

The floats rolled steadily past, bedecked with lights. Confetti made a paper blizzard. The jostling of the crowd and the vibrant voice of it was like a prologue and an overture to a night of singing gladness.

Presently Wanda was in a small restaurant, opposite Peter Deland at a table. He ordered, and in a mystic haze she ate what was placed before her.

"Better than selling flowers, isn't it?"

"Much better!"

"I'm glad you like it," Deland told her. "It isn't right for any girl not to have a little pleasure sometimes. I guess you don't have a great deal."

Wanda looked up into his gray eyes.

"I manage to struggle along. At least," she told him cheerfully, "I have my dreams."

"Dreams," Deland laughed sympathetically, "can be such elusive things. I have mine, too."

"Yours can come true," Wanda pointed out.

"Not always." He leaned forward. "I suppose you know that Diana Courtney came home to-day. She insisted upon orchids after she had come to my office to sign some documents. What did you think of her?"

Wanda propped her chin in the petal pink palm of one hand.

"I think she's beautiful, don't you?"

"Rarely beautiful," Deland agreed. He seemed about to add something, changed his mind and spoke on a new subject.

"WHAT now? It's after midnight. Shall we follow the throng and see what will happen next? Or do you wish to go home?"

"I think I'd better go home," Wanda murmured, after a momentary debate with herself. "I'm a little tired, and I must be up early to-morrow to cut all the flowers that will arrive at the tavern."

"I'll get a taxi," Deland declared when they were out in the street again, "and make sure you're delivered safely to your doorstep."

"Oh, but you needn't trouble to do that. I can walk," she told him earnestly. "It isn't far."

"Don't you want me to see you home?"

Frankness was part of Peter Deland's charm. Wanda had recognized it when he had first stopped to purchase a *boutonnière* weeks previous. With his clear gaze upon her, subterfuge or deceit was impossible. Impulsively she touched his hand.

"I don't live in a very choice neighborhood," she said in a low voice. "Marquis Street. Perhaps you know the district"

His gaze held her own steadfastly.

"What has that to do with it? Please believe that I'm no snob. If you lived in the worst street in the world I would still insist upon seeing you home. Are you ready? Wait just a minute while I look up a taxi. They're probably at a premium to-night."

Deland dashed away and Wanda waited. When he returned he had found a conveyance. It was an antique

barouche with a bony steed between its shafts. Its proprietor and driver had resurrected it, realizing there were profits to be made through the scarcity of more modern equipages.

"We will ride in state!" Deland declared gayly, handing her in and dropping down beside her on the musty upholstery. "Marquis Street, driver. Be careful you don't run into any traffic jams."

"Trust me, sir," the jehu on the box replied gravely.

The barouche rolled away. Wanda turned to Peter Deland. He had drawn close to her and accidentally their shoulders touched. His hand closed over hers, warm and magnetic. The empty streets echoed to the plodding ring of the horse's hoofs.

"What a night for romance, Wanda. The moon—this old city—the carnival—everything. It's enough to make any man admit his love. Would you laugh if I told you your eyes were like the stars, shadowy, alluring stars, and that your hand was tiny and cold? Would you laugh if I went further and told you that to-night, when I walked into Cartier's and saw you perched on your stool, woebegone and so little, I knew I loved you?"

THE thrill that surged through Wanda was electrical. It seemed to stimulate her and arouse a fierce ecstasy. It lasted only for a frenzied round of seconds before it died like a suddenly quenched fire.

"I won't laugh—because," she said throatily, "it isn't right to encourage such—nonsense."

"Nonsense?" Deland's arm stole around her. "I love you! I've loved you all these weeks unknowingly!"

"Peter—"

"All unknowingly! Love comes but once! When it comes it stays forever! I will always love you! Wanda, I want you to marry me! I want to give you some of the happiness you have missed!"

The barouche had reached a traffic crossing and halted.

How it happened, Wanda was not exactly aware, but suddenly she was in Deland's arms. He cradled her there, careless of the open street, the night, and the inquisitive eyes of the city. A delicious, burning ecstasy turned Wanda's blood to fire. It was as if every dream had been touched by a magic wand to come true for her.

Then his kiss was on her lips. She clung to him fervently, something choking her with a poignant rapture.

"You do love me, sweetheart!"

His voice held exulting triumph.

"Would I let you kiss me and hold me if I did not, Peter?"

"Say it, then. Say, 'I love you, Peter.' Let me hear you tell me that."

"I love you, Peter!"

"Did you discover that to-night, too?"

"You have been one of my dreams," Wanda whispered.

He would have kissed her again, but the barouche started off at the same minute. When Wanda opened her closed eyes and circumspectly drew a little apart from him she realized that the drama of their love's awakening had been viewed by a single spectator.

A low, foreign motor car, whose occupant had been witnessing the Mardi Gras, had stopped beside the barouche. From its lowered window the white, beautiful face of Diana Courtney swam like a lily in a pool of darkness.

The eyes of both girls met for a brief minute. The automobile surged ahead at the touch of its throttle.

Wanda sat limply back, a hand

pressed against her racing heart. Diana's glance had scorched her with its fierce intensity. It was a look she knew she would not forget for a long, long time.

A hostile stare that blended craft, hate and understanding. All these things had been in the dark, blazing eyes of Diana Courtney.

THE miracle of first love bloomed like one of Wanda's fairest flowers in the cloistered garden of her dreams.

Vainly she tried to blight its blooming with the cold frost of knowledge. A hundred times each day in the week that followed Wanda endeavored to impress upon herself the impossibility of Peter Deland marrying her.

Such things happened only in books, in plays. There the handsome, gifted lover descended into another world and found love. But in life it was different. And that difference Wanda struggled to use as a sword that might snap the glittering thread of her eager hope.

She could not empty her heart and hands of happiness. Peter's kisses and vows. His love words, his own joy—these things were too near, too close to her to be put away. After all, love was not a matter of riches, of position, rank or station.

Love and romance were things no mortal might successfully control. Love was a gift of the gods, sent down like white-hot lightning to strike where it might. Love was a supreme treasure, and only a fool would toss it away.

Peter knew the conditions of her existence. He had seen the exterior of the house on Marquis Street, had been told of Mother Lobelle and of Wanda's unknown parentage.

He had neither winced nor lost any of his ardent emotion for her in the face of her disclosures. If anything, the knowledge of poverty seemed to draw Deland still closer to her.

Wanda could not help but rejoice in the strength of his love.

Yet there were storm clouds looming on the horizon. She had not forgotten Diana Courtney's hostile glare and what she had innocently overheard in the garden of Heartbreak House. Diana had assumed nebulous proportions in the excitement of Wanda's days.

The end of each working day at Cartier's Tavern took on a new meaning for Wanda. Once she had faced the hours of evening with no enthusiasm. The flower stall was preferable to the house on Marquis Street. Now, with Peter waiting to drive her off in his car, the nights were enchantment.

Wanda opened the front door of Mother Lobelle's, shut it and went into the main room. The woman's rheumatism had improved. She was up and about again.

"Dinner's almost ready, deary. Wash up and I'll have it on the table."

The unusual statement lifted Wanda's poised brows. Usually Mother Lobelle did not do any work around the kitchen.

"You look right pretty, deary. I've been noticing it these past weeks. What's the reason?"

Sitting down before the table, Wanda pulled her chair in.

"I don't think you'd understand. Couldn't we," she hurried on, "make a change, move from here? Surely, if we were careful with what I earn we could afford a better neighborhood, better furniture."

The woman's bleary gaze darted over to her.

"Move from here? Isn't this place good enough for you any more? I know the reason. You're in love."

"I am," Wanda answered. "In love and ashamed to bring him to my home!"

Mother Lobelle brooded. She was untidy, wrinkled and drab. Often Wanda wondered how she stood it all. The bonds of gratitude were indeed strong.

"We might do something," the woman murmured hesitantly. "Tell me the name of your young man, deary."

"Peter Deland," Wanda said.

"Peter—"

Mother Lobelle broke off abruptly and lapsed into one of her customary silences. Wanda, preoccupied with her own thoughts, continued with the meal. There was no use expecting any immediate decision from the woman. Mother Lobelle would have to think the suggestion over.

Wanda jumped up. She was to meet Peter within an hour.

"Come, let me do the dishes," she requested.

The other emerged from her spell of quiet.

"No, no. You run along with your young man. I'll do the dishes tonight."

WHEN Wanda left the house some time later, Mother Lobelle put away the last of the dishes and went into her room. From a box under her disordered cot she took a faded black shawl and a hat. She donned both, turned out the light and hobbled to the door.

A few minutes later she made her way slowly along Marquis Street and within a half hour had reached her destination.

This was the main entrance into the grounds of Heartbreak House. Resting for a space there, the woman followed the driveway up to the golden windows of the house itself. A servant looked superciliously out at her, requesting her wishes.

"I wish to see Miss Diana Courtney on a private matter. I'll not go away until I do see her, either," Mother Lobelle stated in no uncertain manner.

"I can't admit you unless you state your business."

Something like a spark lighted the old woman's gaze.

"You tell Miss Courtney I want to see her! None of your impudence, young man!"

"What is it, Horace?"

The sudden cool, level tones of Diana Courtney intruded. The servant explained. With a sly grimace Mother Lobelle crossed the threshold and stepped into the foyer of Heartbreak House at a word from the girl.

"Come in here, please. Just what is it you want?"

A change came over Mother Lobelle. She drank in the exquisite beauty of Diana Courtney with an eager, thirsty glance. Her hard, unprepossessing face softened. She gestured across the room.

"Shut the door, deary."

Wonderingly, Diana obeyed. There was something about the old woman that fascinated her. She came back on quick feet, her red lacquer heels clicking a tune.

"Now, what does all this mean? Please be brief; my time is limited."

"I've come here to tell you something important," the old hag began in a wheedling tone. "Everybody says you're going to marry Mr. Deland."

An angry flush suffused the girl's face.

"If that's all you have to say you might have spared yourself the trouble. Mr. Deland is infatuated with a

cheap little flower girl from the slums. What was your idea in coming to me with that gossip?"

MOTHER LOBELLE smiled craftily.

"Softly, deary, softly! Mr. Deland ain't going to marry Wanda White—not after he learns what I know about her."

comes here with wild statements, unless they can back them up," she said cannily.

For a long minute Mother Lobelle studied her with the same fierce interest she had first displayed. A wave of agitation passed and she nodded toward a chair.

"Come and sit close to me. I will tell you what I know—"

"Tell her the truth!" Mother Lobelle demanded, as Wanda wailed, her heart ice

Diana's curiosity conquered her pride, just as the woman had intended, and she asked eagerly:

"What do you know about Wanda White? How could you break off their engagement?"

Mother Lobelle smiled craftily.

"I ain't telling no secrets. Give me a little money, enough to work with, and I'll promise you that Peter Deland will never marry Wanda White!"

Diana Courtney's dark eyes narrowed. Anticipative interest flushed her cheeks, but she was careful to conceal her emotions.

"I don't give money to any one who

Some thirty minutes later Mother Lobelle was being ushered out into the foyer when Diana's Aunt Phoebe met her face to face.

"Why, Emmaline! Is it really you? After all these years—"

Mother Lobelle stared at her blankly.

"Did you speak to me, lady?"

Aunt Phoebe frowned. She considered her intently for a minute, and then apologized.

"I'm so sorry. I mistook you for Mrs. Phelps, the housekeeper who was here the first year this house was occupied."

The servant held the front door wide. Mother Lobelle crossed the threshold, her bony fingers tight over her shabby pocketbook, and disappeared into the night.

IT was Sunday, the sky was blue, the air was wine, and the road under Peter Deland's motor wheels unrolled like velvet.

Wanda's heart sang a blissful refrain. How wonderful to be beside the one she loved, to smile back at the world! Her happiness seemed too great to bear.

It was almost as if she would awake and find it all one of the dreams the humble little flower girl had lived before romance came to lead her into its golden realm.

For the most part the country was flat, but they came upon a wooded knoll above the mighty Mississippi. Stern-wheelers drifted lazily upstream. Cotton barges floated along in the opposite direction. Now and again the wailing chant of darkies floated across the sun-painted water like elfin, half-caught echoes.

Wanda and Peter spread a snowy cloth on the grass beneath the trees. Deland's wicker basket yielded all the good things the chef at Cartier's had prepared.

The tranquil peace of the Sabbath lay about them while they lunched gayly. Then Wanda repacked the basket, and with her head against Peter's shoulder, sat and listened to him sketch word pictures of the joy before them.

"Dearest, I cannot believe it isn't a dream. You do love me!"

"And you love me, Wanda?"

"So much that it—it frightens me sometimes."

Deland held her very close. He buried his face in her hair and pressed kisses upon her brow, the lids of her shut eyes and the scarlet gateway of her lips.

"Why should we wait?" he cried. "We'll be married to-morrow, slip away for a honeymoon to Havana, the Bahamas, Florida—any place you wish. Then, when we return we can stay—"

"Peter! Do you mean it?"

His answer was another kiss. Wanda drew his head down to hers.

"To-morrow, sweetheart. Will you?" Deland breathed.

She opened her eyes and let him see the rapture they held.

"Yes, to-morrow!" Wanda whispered.

THE dusk was settling when they returned to Marquis Street and parted. Wanda watched Peter's car until it was lost in the twilight.

She went up the time-worn steps, remembering that this time to-morrow night she would be a bride. The last time she would ever enter this house in the spell of the twilight as Wanda White!

Mother Lobelle, following her habit of the past weeks, was in the kitchen. A kettle was singing, and the aroma of cooking food was pleasant on the warm air.

Wanda went into her own room, changed her dress and bent to the mirror. A radiant Wanda looked back at her, a girl whose eyes were filled with star dust and entrancing joy. It was so apparent that Mother Lobelle regarded her shrewdly.

"You look happy, deary. Happier than ever. Has your young man proposed?"

Suddenly Wanda wanted all the world to know what had happened.

"I'm going to be married to-morrow! Married to-morrow to Peter! We leave for Havana on our honeymoon in the evening! And you are to be well taken care of—we discussed it fully. Each week I will send you sufficient money to keep you in comfort."

Mother Lobelle seemed to withdraw into herself. She sat wrapped in silence, but her eyes were busy beneath their narrowed lids. Without comment she listened to the plans Wanda unfolded, taciturn and reserved until the meal was over and the dishes washed and put away.

"If you're to be married to-morrow," Mother Lobelle stated finally, "I must tell you to-night what you should know—what I have kept secret all these years."

Wanda turned to her quickly.

"I mean," the woman said, "I will take you to your father!"

Wanda stiffened. With parted lips she stared into the wrinkled face before her.

"My father? But I was in—you took me from that—"

"From that orphanage, yes. When you were a child your father sent money every so often. Now he has none. Come, get your hat and we will go to him. You must receive his blessing on the night before your marriage!"

Like one in a dream, Wanda found herself out in the street, beside Mother Lobelle. Her father! After all these years!

She told herself she should be brimming over with expectancy. Instead, something cold and ominous filled her. What sort of father was it who put his daughter in an orphanage when an infant, allowing her to grow to young womanhood in the drab confines of Marquis Street without even making himself known to her?

"Call a cab," Mother Lobelle said. "I can't walk the way I used to, afflicted with this rheumatism and everything."

Their taxi crossed to another old section of the city. The streets were narrow and winding. Ancient houses with balconades faced each other, and in open doorways somnolent men smoked long pipes in the murk.

Children played in the gutters, dogs roamed the pavements and, when they left the taxi and pressed on down one of the byways, Wanda heard the shrill, haranguing voice of a woman.

She shivered a little, forcing herself on to the grimy, gray façade of the low, rambling house before which Mother Lobelle hesitated and peered at dubiously.

"Yes, this is it. It's five years since I've been here."

THE lower hall was lightless, but at the top of the steep, lighted stairs a gas jet burned behind thick slabs of green glass.

Wanda mounted the steps, Mother Lobelle wheezing along beside her. When they reached the landing the woman waited to recover her breath. Without another word she crossed to the door and pounded on it lustily.

In the shadows, Wanda waited with a mingling of dread and curiosity holding her transfixed. Her father! This gloomy house, filled with an eerie quiet. What did it mean? What was she about to discover?

A door opened slowly. Yellow light gushed over the threshold and a man stood framed against it. He was very old, with thick white hair, a lowered head, bent knees and great, powerful arms. He looked out suspiciously,

shading his eyes with one hand. Mother Lobelle laughed.

"Don't you know me? You should —I've taken care of your child for a long time. She's here, Latzo. Wanda's here with me. I've brought her to meet her father."

Unsteadily, Wanda went into the room. The man took her cold hands in his, mumbling something under his breath. Wanda gazed at him with wide, spellbound eyes. He was very dark, with a Spanish look to him, and a dignity of which time had not robbed him.

"My daughter! My little Wanda!" He turned to question Mother Lobelle. "Why did you bring her here to-night?"

"To-morrow she is to marry!"

"And—to-night—"

The woman laughed again.

"I thought it only right she should know about you. No use breaking her young man's heart as well as her own. Tell her, Latzo. Tell the child the truth!"

The man dropped Wanda's hands. She stepped back, suddenly dizzy. Mother Lobelle's words rang in her ears like some evil tocsin. Speechless, breathless, fear forging an icy band about her heart, Wanda waited.

"What—do you want me to tell her?"

Mother Lobelle struck the back of the chair she stood beside impatiently.

"The truth!"

"That I am—Spanish?"

The woman turned to Wanda, her bleary eyes glinting.

"That is what he has always said. It isn't true! Your father knows it. He knows that I know it. So you are Spanish?" she said to the other. "You are still keeping that story, Latzo? Deary, don't believe it. He—"

The man's shoulders seemed to crumple and sag. While Wanda watched him in fascinated terror he made a dull, lifeless gesture and smiled bitterly. Then he spoke, and in his words Wanda saw the doors of doom open to receive her.

"No, I am not Spanish," he said slowly, painfully. "I am what—what people call an *octoroon!*"

THE days, weeks and months that followed were chaotic blurs to Wanda. She had written Peter Deland a letter of farewell when she had returned to Marquis Street that night. In it she had told him everything, and concluded with words over which she dropped scalding tears.

The letter had gone to Peter in the morning. She knew he had received it about the same time the train she boarded was taking her away from the city where she had known the radiant heights of happiness and the dark abyss of despair.

After what she had discovered, Wanda knew that New Orleans would be forever a haunted city. The thought of staying on there, so close to Peter Deland, and yet so remote, was torture. Numbly, her heart like a cold, barren thing within her, Wanda followed the trail north.

Mother Lobelle had surprised her by giving her a sum of money sufficient to take her to some new place. Wanda, in her misery, never stopped to wonder how the old woman had come by it. Enough that she had it, that she could turn away from Cartier's Tavern and Marquis Street forever.

In Savannah, Wanda found employment in a restaurant. The proprietor knew Joel Cartier. Wanda was engaged to help in the coat room. She had thought of New York, the

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stone city of the Seven Million, but Savannah and Emil Fashard's Eating House on Wharf Street seemed refuge enough.

The girl she assisted was kind without being inquisitive. Her name was Effie Spencer, and she found a room for Wanda in her lodging house.

The time that had passed so slowly suddenly quickened its tempo. All at once Wanda found the magnolias of the southland were blooming. Another springtime had crept over the world. Grief and pain still held her prisoner, but she felt she was learning not to brood so completely upon the love that had lifted her to the stars before she had fallen crashing into the dark well of desolation.

Peter, her Peter, stalked her dreams by night. She had got over seeing him by day, imagining that she glimpsed him in the street or at Fashard's. She grew calm enough to wonder if Peter had married Diana Courtney. She remembered his admiration for the girl and what Diana had vowed in the garden that night.

Perhaps, even now, Peter had gone to live at Heartbreak House!

It became hot over night. Sultry stars gave way to the lowering dawn of a torrid day. The boarding house was oppressive, humid. Wanda was glad it would be twilight and cooler when she and Effie Spencer reported for duty in the coat room of the restaurant.

All the flaming day she lingered in her room, Effie stretched out in a chair before the window, waiting for a breeze that was reluctant in its coming.

"Look here, honey," Effie began. "I know you've been hiding a heap of trouble. It's none of my affair, of course. Still, they say confession's good for the soul. Why don't you try it out and see. Maybe I can help you some."

THE girl was petite and golden-haired, a saucy-eyed young woman who had come down from Richmond and had been at Fashard's for the better part of two years. All at once Wanda began to understand that sharing her story might be a safety valve for the emotions that stifled her.

So, in the lazy heat of the southern afternoon, she told Effie everything. The other listened without comment to the very end. Arising, she went across to Wanda and put both arms around her.

"I don't believe it! Sounds suspicious to me. Too much like a book or something!"

Wanda smiled bitterly.

"You don't believe it? Effie, if you only knew what I've suffered! If—"

"You said your sweetheart's name is Peter Deland!" Effie interrupted. "And that he's an attorney in New Orleans. Honey, you should have gone to him with the story instead of writing and running away."

Wanda shook her head and turned the conversation into another channel. There was no possible good bringing up the ghosts of what-might-have-been.

When she fell into a troubled doze, Effie tiptoed quietly out of the room, shut the door behind her, and went to her own quarters. There she donned her small straw turban and hurried out.

A few minutes later she was writing a telegram to Peter Deland in New Orleans, after having made inquiries as to his address. When the message was taken and paid for, Effie retraced her steps to the boarding house. And,

much later, when Wanda opened her eyes, the small, blond girl was in the chair by the window, patiently awaiting the breeze that never arrived.

At Fashard's, Saturday was the most important night of the week. At the coat room wicket, Wanda surveyed the restaurant proper beyond. A jazz orchestra played gay syncopation. The polished floor was crowded with dancers, and at the window a fragile moon looked briefly in.

To Wanda all the world seemed joyous. Girls smiled up at the young men they danced with. At a corner table two sat together with their heads drawn confidentially close. Low laughter sounded through rifts in the music, and Wanda's sad heart seemed to sink anew.

Now she was denied even her dreams. She must plod on forever, alone and sorrowing. To-day would be the same as to-morrow. This month, next month, and next year was without promise.

She winked away the tears that stung her brown eyes. Loneliness was like a sword, heartaches almost unnerving. The love that had seemed so glamorous and glorious lay like cold ashes on her heart's empty hearth.

THROUGH the mist of unshed tears Wanda suddenly saw a straw hat on the ledge of the wicket. She took it automatically, reached into her number tin and pushed a check through the hat's band. The other half of it she tendered the owner.

When she held out her hand with the check in it fingers tightened over hers in a crushing grip.

Wanda looked up and into the gray eyes of Peter Deland!

"*Wanda!*"

She thought she was going to faint. Finally the black spots dancing before her vision cleared. Deland still stood there, alive and real!

Fantastically, Wanda seemed back at Cartier's Tavern. It was the night of the Mardi Gras. Her flowers were unsold and the streets were filled for the pageant. Peter had come to take her into the colorful center of it.

"Why have you come here, Peter?" she heard herself asking in a muffled, agonized voice.

"To take you back home, sweetheart! For weeks I've been searching for you—everywhere! I have important news for you. A telegram reached me and brought me directly here."

Deland had a momentary conference with Emil Fashard. Then Wanda was beside him on the bench in a dusty little park under the moon. Even yet she could not bring herself to believe Peter's coming was not part of her tormenting nightmare. She must awake from it to find herself back at the boarding house in the humid, airless void of morning.

"First of all," Deland began, "I went directly to Mother Lobelle. She tried to be crafty, but it didn't work. When I threatened her with arrest she did what I expected—confessed her duplicity."

"How—"

Deland's arm stole about her.

"It's not a long or an unusual story. Wanda, *you* are Diana Courtney, the mistress of Heartbreak House! Your father was Nigel Courtney. Shortly after your birth your mother entrusted you to the care of Mrs. Phelps, the housekeeper. Mrs. Phelps, I might explain, is now Mother Lobelle. You see?"

Wanda inclined her head, held rigid by the revelation.

"What else?" she asked faintly.

Deland drew her closer to him.

"After your father's death Mrs. Phelps went back to Heartbreak House with her own daughter—the girl who has been called Diana Courtney all these years. When the false Diana wanted to marry me, mother and daughter plotted together to get Latzo to pose as your father. However, that is all past history. Wanda—I will always call you that—we go home tomorrow. Diana is still at Heartbreak House. I've suggested that she turn back Nigel Courtney's estate to you and keep Heartbreak House for herself—if you are willing, of course."

Wanda touched his hand with tremulous fingers.

"Yes, let her have it. I couldn't bear to think of living there. It's so old, so horrible, and the cause of so much unhappiness. Let Diana have it—I only want—"

She stopped, broke off, and Deland leaned to kiss her. Crying and laughing a little, Wanda clung to him, heedless of who might pass and see them.

"What do you want, sweetheart?" Peter Deland asked.

Wanda opened her wet eyes and smiled.

"Only you, Peter," she answered softly, "and our love!"

Love's Pean

IF I walked the hill, my dear,
Perhaps you'd dream of me;
But there's the danger still, my dear,
Your eyes would blinded be.
Because it is a fierce white light
That beats upon a hill;
And even in the friendly night
Star winds are never still.

There's shadow in the vale, my dear,
And pain and care and toil;
The lights full often fail, my dear,
Seeds fall on barren soil.
But still I would not change my lot
For empty place of pride;
Glad happiness the years have brought—
For you are by my side.

-A. Leslie.

Audrey glared at him coolly

Miserably unhappy, Audrey Lane was planning to "end it all" when Fate gave her a vision of

Another's Need

By Edith Lyle Ragsdale

IT was one of those days, common to the East Coast, in late autumn. A damp wind, rolling in off the bleak Atlantic, carried scuds of vaporous, gray fog.

Clouds, opaque, drab, hurrying across the sky, gave occasional glimpses of a moon-like sun—a queer, rayless, warmthless ball of silver; robbed, by the cloud-wrack, of its brilliancy and cheer.

A bit of a girl, caught in the maelstrom of hurrying men and women, was swept forward into one of New York's many subway stations. Dropping a five-cent piece into the slot, she passed through the turnstile and, almost immediately, found herself squeezed into an end seat of an overcrowded car, rushing to her destination.

Clutching a worn, imitation-leather

Google

satchel containing nearly all of her belongings, she sat still, her big gray eyes probing the past—

AUDREY LANE'S story was pathetically commonplace. Six months before, glowing with plans for the future, she had come to New York. Obtaining a position with the brokerage firm of Wyndham & Frisby, she had, by practicing the strictest economy, managed to keep going. Then, a month ago, her firm had gone to the wall in the biggest financial panic Wall Street had ever known.

At first she had not worried, even though the crash had left her jobless, with a month's salary due, nothing in the bank, and next to nothing in her purse.

She had expected to find work within a week, but the end of the month found her still idle—and desperate. A slump seemed to have struck town. Hopelessly she had walked the streets until the soles of her shoes were worn through.

Leaving her tiny but comfortable hall bedroom, Audrey had moved into cheaper quarters in a much less desirable neighborhood. Day by day her money continued to vanish.

Finally she pawned her clothing, everything but a blue-serge suit, one hat and a few underthings. Still she struggled on, hoping, praying that some one would want her services.

But nobody did.

Getting up off the lumpy mattress that morning, she had eaten two dry sandwiches, saved over from the night before, and had opened her pocketbook. Inside was one lone nickel.

Looking at the little white disk, feeling utterly miserable and broken in spirit, she had come to a decision. Instead of buying rolls or coffee with that coin, instead of continuing the one-sided fight, she'd end it all; and the easiest way was the river.

THE subway train, rumbling to a stop, roused Audrey and she got out, listlessly climbed the stairs and emerged into the sunlight of a balmy November day. For a moment she stood looking about undecidedly. Then, slowly, very slowly, she turned toward Battery Park—and the Hudson!

Halfway across the park the turretlike Aquarium caught her eye. A faint smile parted her thin lips.

"I've always wanted to see those fish." She paused uncertainly. "Me working on Wall Street, a few blocks away from the Aquarium, and never even seeing the inside of it. Well, why not? There's plenty of time." She shuddered. "An hour more or less won't matter."

So she entered the building. Instantly a surging mass of men, women and children engulfed her, crowded her against the rail of the alligator pool, where she stood, panting, glad of the chance to rest.

For the first time in years she was free. At the thought she thrilled wildly.

"Well, there's one thing about it, there won't be any more drudgery. No more scrimping to make one dime do the duty of two. For the rest of today I'm going to do exactly as I please."

"And—then?" Something, deep down inside of her sent up the question.

"I don't know—or care." Her eyes hardened. "Why should I? I've done my best—and failed." A little sigh fluttered across her lips. "I'm just another down-and-outer—why worry?"

But the crowd, jostling and pushing, laughing and talking, stimulated her. She began enjoying herself immensely. Although the girl was still hungry, she even found herself humming a cheerful air.

Glancing at the treacherous-looking finny occupants of a glass-inclosed pool, her eyes suddenly grew round and startled. A half-subdued cry left her lips.

"Horrible!" she breathed.

"Certainly are!" came a heartening voice. "Hell-benders."

"Well, you needn't swear about them!"

Turning fully upon the man who had spoken, Audrey Lane glared at him coolly.

"If they are ugly, do you suppose they can help it?"

"I'm not swearing." The man took off his hat with a polite bow. A smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. "That's their name. See?" he added, pointing to the plate at the bottom of the case.

"Oh!" She tried to be severe—and failed. A moment later her laughter mingled with that of the man. "Next time I'll look at the tag."

From beneath long lashes, she studied the stranger. He was a husky, well-built man in—so she judged—his early thirties. Big and brown, with skin like leather and eyes that twinkled.

A crowd of babbling tourists jostled her roughly, nearly knocked her over.

"Do you care to take my arm?" the man invited pleasantly.

"Thanks."

With a quiver of delight, Audrey slipped her hand onto the rough coat sleeve. A little songbird, deep hidden in her soul, awoke. A thrill of joy tingled through her body.

Her slim shoulders suddenly lost their droop. Avidly her fingers caressed the cloth beneath them. Her head came up.

"They'll think we're lovers—or married," she laughed inwardly. "Nobody'll know that I'm just a bit of driftwood on the ebbing sea of life." Her eyes were starry. "No—they'll think I belong! And, oh, how I've always *wanted* to belong!"

THE man's voice, kindly, husky, lifted her from the pleasurable pretense into reality.

"You are taking a holiday?"

"Yes." She smiled squarely up into the warm, brown eyes. "The first since—I don't know how long."

"You poor kid!"

They were standing before a vicious-looking shark. The crowd was streaming past and, for a second, they were isolated.

"Say—" His face reddened. "Look here, miss, I'm not a rounder. I've always been on the up-and-up." His brow puckered. "What I'm trying to put over is this: I'm—alone. And lonesome as—the dickens. Now, if you'd—" again he broke off, searching for words. Then: "You're out for a bit of fun, you say. Well, so'm I. So, what's the matter with us pooling our time? Going together and making a day of it?"

"Pooling our time?" amazedly. "You want me to—"

"Yes!" His eyes were glowing. "We'll go any place you say. Pull any fool stunt! Make a picnic that'll be something to think of when we're old!"

The early training of the girl rose up. She sent a curt "No!" to her lips. But before it quite dropped off the tip of her tongue a revulsion of feeling

swept over her. All her life she had been saying "No" to happiness. So, instead, she flung up her head and laughed.

"I'll do it! I'll take you up!"

"That's the spirit!"

Swinging around, the man began elbowing his way through the throng. As they emerged from the building, he spoke again.

"Now—where to?"

"Let me see." A dimple slipped into Audrey's thin cheek. "How about Coney Island to begin with? I'm simply wild about it!"

The man smiled with amusement at her girlish enthusiasm.

"Sure, I'll take you there, even though the season's closed. Last time I was at Coney I left my cigarette case, a keepsake, at the Sea Gull Café. I phoned Andrew, the head waiter, and he said he'd hold it for me. That must have been—let me see—a month ago, the time of the big crash on Wall Street. I went there to forget."

SOON they were in a subway train, scuttling through the tunnel. Audrey's mind was a riot of emotions. For the first time in her life she was flouting the conventions. Adventure had her in its grip. Her heart was laughing.

"I'd kind of like to know what you're thinking about that makes your eyes dance and your lips crinkle," grinned the man beside her.

"Oh!" The gray eyes flashed upward, met the brown ones, wavered before the look in them fell. "I was thinking how funny life is. To-day, for instance, was to have been a most dreary one. Whereas, it has turned into one of pleasure. One," with a little catch in her voice, "that 'll stay with me until I—die."

The arrival of their train at Surf Avenue made a reply unnecessary. Leaving the car, they walked down to the beach. The tide was coming in and the sand, wet and shining, clung to their shoes.

Kneeling, Audrey picked up a handful of the moist sand, squeezed it into a crumbly ball.

"Let's forget everything but to-day."

"I have."

"Fine! Now, master of ceremonies, where shall we go a-voyaging?"

"Let's see. Now, there's the land of Golconda. But—"

Looking at his watch, a beautiful thing of white gold and diamonds, the man exclaimed:

"Gosh! It's almost noon! Let's put off sailing until we've had a snack! I'm famished and I suppose you are, too. This air makes a fellow as ravenous as a wolf!"

He slipped his hand beneath her elbow, wondered at its sharpness.

"Let's!" Eagerly the girl looked up. "Talk about a wolf! I'm so hungry, I'd shame a whole pack!"

Strolling along the boardwalk, they watched the vanishing of ships on the horizon.

"You know," suddenly remarked the man, "we've been together three hours. And," softly, "it seems I've known you for that many years."

"Do you feel that way, too?" demanded the girl. "Why, from the very first I felt like I had known you for ages and ages."

"Well, have you been enjoying yourself?"

"Every minute!"

He swung along beside her.

"We'll take an hour for lunch. The rest'll do you good." His admiring eyes enveloped her. "You're such a

little bit of a person—I'm afraid I've walked you too far!"

"No," she said. "I love walking."

A WOMAN, almost barbaricly bedizened with jewels, swathed in furs and reeking of heavy perfume, rolled by in a wheel chair. As she came abreast of the man and the girl, she smiled into his eyes and nodded familiarly.

Turning swiftly, Audrey surprised an avid light in the eyes of her companion. Abashed by it, her own glance fell.

Not until they were almost at the door of the restaurant did the man speak. Then, in tones oddly at variance with his former speech, he said disconcertingly:

"I just happened to remember an —an engagement I have for to-night. So, if it's all the same to you, we'll leave at about six o'clock. That is, I'll put you on your train—"

"Why," Audrey inquired blandly, "aren't you going back with me to New York?"

"I'm afraid not. My—engagement —is here," he answered evasively.

"Oh!" Quite tonelessly the girl spoke. Hurt, amazed by the man's inexplicable conduct, she continued slowly: "In that event, you needn't even go to the station with me."

"Oh, sure," he said vaguely, "I'll have plenty of time for that. Then any date you like, we'll take in some of the night life of little old New York."

"I—hardly think so," Audrey murmured.

Sensing a change, the man walked along miserably beside her.

Inwardly the girl was fuming.

"You idiot!" she stormed to herself. "Less than four hours ago you didn't know such a person was in existence! Why, you don't know his name yet—nor he yours! And, deep down in your heart, you're furiously jealous of that woman! What's it your business if he's dated up to-night?"

"Here we are."

The matter-of-fact words put an end to her self-chastisement. Opening the door, he held it while she entered the Sea Gull Café.

The girl's nostrils quivered. The scent of hot food swirled about her, driving all other sensations from her mind.

"Are you hungry?" The man had surprised a pathetic eagerness in the gaunt gray eyes.

"Didn't I tell you," she asked pertly, "that I was famished? You see, I'm on diet."

"Oh, you girls!" the man protested. "Say, I don't believe in that sort of thing. I know it's stylish to be slim —but"—shaking his head—"not for me."

They were inside the huge, high-ceilinged room. A waiter guided them to a table.

"Andrew knows I like this view," remarked the man.

"Wonderful beyond words!" exulted the girl, letting her gaze sweep out over the boardwalk and a long expanse of white sand and bluish-gray ocean sparkling in the sunlight. "I like it terribly much," she added.

"Take off your coat and be comfortable," suggested the man, laying possessive hands on the little serge coat. "My, but you are tiny! Listen! You'd better cut out that diet, whatever it is." His anxious survey took in the pitiful thinness of her body. "We're going to begin with clam chowder and go straight through to dessert!"

His eyes were twinkling. Seeming-

ly, he had thrown off his restraint of a while ago. He turned jovially to the waiter.

"Hullo, Andrew. How's tricks?"

"Fairly well, sir." The servitor beamed. "We have some fine blue-points, to-day, sir. In fact, the whole bill is particularly good, sir."

WHILE waiting for the first course, Audrey was conscious that her companion was talking quietly and interestingly. His English was good, his words well chosen. The girl marveled. Just at first she had thought him a bit rough.

Eventually Andrew reappeared. Set down his tray. Straightened the cloth. Arranged the dishes.

"If there is anything else, sir?"

"Not just at present."

After the waiter had gone and they had begun on an oyster cocktail, the man spoke again.

"Now, Miss——"

"Lane. Audrey Lane."

Holding a tiny morsel of food on the edge of her spoon, the girl smiled across the table into his eyes.

"Audrey!" He repeated the name softly. "That's unusual—and pretty. *Your* name. I couldn't imagine you as as Lizzie or Ann."

He began fumbling in his pockets.

"I've some cards, somewhere." He scowled. "I should have introduced myself before now." He laid a bit of engraved pasteboard beside her plate. "My only excuse is—I've been too happy."

Excitedly the girl stared at the name.

"Why—why—you aren't *the* Mr. Wyndham, are you?"

"Well, no," he responded modestly. "I can't say that I am."

"I thought," Audrey explained, "that maybe you were Harvey Wyndham, the silent partner in a brokerage house where I used to work."

A look of amazement swept over his face.

"I—I—that is—maybe I was. But right now I'm broke and—well, to be perfectly frank, everything was swept away when our firm went under—everything! There's some nasty talk about the way our firm did business, so I can't get a cent of credit anywhere. I used to be a professional baseball player, but when a man gets to be thirty-seven they let him go. I tried dabbling in Wall Street, as you know, but I'm not a broker myself, I just backed the firm with my name and a little capital. Now I don't know what I'll do for a living. But"—he changed the subject suddenly—"I can't make this all out. You say you used to work at our place?"

"Yes," she said sadly, "but I'm not working anywhere now."

"I'm not either." He spooned his clam chowder. "Like this soup?"

"Immensely!"

Audrey smiled, swinging away from the subject which she sensed was distasteful to Wyndham.

"Doesn't food make all the difference in the world?" she remarked lightly. "Just one bowl of hot, spicy chowder causes one's mental sky to do a lightning-change act! The leaden gray of despair vanishes and the glorious colors of hope—"

Suddenly she checked herself, blushing in confusion.

The man nodded to her encouragingly. "You're right."

His eyes flickered from the narrow, white face before him, out to the tumbling sea.

"Yes," his eyes challenged hers, "I've had one fierce wallop. I owe it

to you, Miss Lane, to tell you that I'm completely sunk—a down-and-outer."

AT the repetition of her own words, used earlier in the day, the girl went cold. "A down-and-" she began, but the muscles in her throat contracted, strangled the sound.

to say! Perhaps," brightening, "they'll give you another chance!"

"Not so's you could notice it!" was the bitter reply. "Not those vultures on Wall Street or those money-mad team managers."

Shaken to her soul at the tragedy in this man's life, Audrey blinked rap-

A woman, almost barbarically bedizened with jewels, rolled by in a wheel chair—nodded familiarly

"Yes. A down-and-outer." Wyndham repeated the words, taking a fierce pleasure in them. "You'll think I'm—coo-coo," he laughed harshly. "Well, maybe I am."

"I—don't—understand." Bewilderment fogged the girl's mind.

"Well, it's this way. I've been a baseball man all my life. I don't know anything else. And," flushing darkly, "I *can* play ball. Good ball. But—" His composure crumbled. His breath whistled through his teeth. "They wouldn't renew my contract." He flung out his hands. "And so—on the junk pile!"

"I'm—sorry." Involuntarily the girl reached across the table, laid her hand on his. "Oh, I wish I knew what

idly to keep the tears from falling. Turning to the window, she let her eyes rove across the waves,

For five minutes they sat in silence. Then the girl spoke.

"There are lots of things you could do."

"I'm afraid not," said Harvey. "You see, it's sort of like the old saw about the leopard changing his spots. I began baseball when I was just big enough to hold a bat. By the time I made high I was getting talked about. College found me on the team. Then, instead of taking up medicine, as dad wanted me to, I got on as a semi-pro. In 1917 I went across with the marines. Even in the service I found time to swat a ball now and then. After

that — big league stuff." His face worked convulsively. "And now—I'm too old to do the only thing I know how to do well."

"What are you going to do?" Almost fearfully the girl asked the question. "You surely have some plans for the future?"

"Perhaps." Idly he rolled a crumb of bread into a pellet.

"Would you care — to — to — tell me?" Her voice was the merest whisper of sound. "I might—be able to—to help you."

Harvey moved uneasily in his chair.

"I'm afraid a good little Sunday school girl like you wouldn't approve of my—plans," he responded sullenly. "You've never been up against real hard luck. And, take it from me, I'm to the wall, all right. Girl, I'm desperate! Just a bit of flotsam. No family. No job. No prospects. Practically broke. My present lot is—rotten. My future—God!"

He wiped his brow on which great drops of moisture stood. "Well, I'll—"

AUDREY LANE interrupted him crisply:

"I asked you about your plans! Suppose you quit pitying yourself long enough to tell me what you intend doing." Her eyes, starry-bright, met his unflinchingly. *"What are your plans?"*

Much as though a bucket of cold water had suddenly deluged him, Wyndham straightened.

"You wouldn't understand." His eyes fell before the fury in the thin little face. "You wouldn't get my slant on it."

"Probably not. But—tell me."

"Well," doggedly, "I doped it out along this line. New York doesn't want me. The Wall Street vultures—after squeezing me dry—don't want me. Nobody'll give me the chance to earn an honest living. So—" a deeper red mounting up to his hair, "I'm going to—to take it!"

His eyes met hers defiantly.

"I've never been dishonest—but I'm going to—well, collect what the world owes me. To-night. That woman who passed us on the boardwalk—as brazen a gold-digger as ever lived. Housed in a mansion. All kind of money. A respectable New York millionaire pays for it. Did you see the jewelry strung all over her? Well, that gave me an idea. When she wakes up in the morning she's going to be looking for it!"

Audrey's heart leaped. In the face of the horror that she felt at the man's confession, relief surged through her. It wasn't love, it wasn't desire for the woman that she had surprised in his eyes. But her words were pitiless.

"Oh, I see! You, Harvey Wyndham, one-time baseball idol and Wall Street broker, are going to become a thief. Just the common, garden variety."

Like particles of sleet, the girl's words cut into the man's soul.

"A man like you!"

The infinite contempt in the level tones flayed him. She arose.

"Let's be going."

"Where to—a show?"

Getting up, Wyndham laid a bill on the table.

"No. I want to watch the ocean—and talk."

They walked back to the beach, where a huge tree, washed in from the seven seas, lay rotting, barnacled about by shells. Dropping down, the girl spoke quietly, as though nothing unpleasant had happened.

"I've had a perfectly wonderful day. And I want to thank you for it."

"All the gratitude's on my side," said Harvey. "It was perfectly corking of you to give me this pleasure." His hand closed over hers. "And it *has* been a pleasure. The greatest I've ever known."

ONE of the sudden silences that had come upon them now and then all day, fell. The man broke it.

"I'm curious about you. I wonder if you'd mind telling me something about your home life. You are so different from the general run of girls."

"There isn't a lot to tell. My father was a minister. It was his joy to teach me the higher things of life. Music, literature, philosophy—" Pausing, her eyes turned back into the past. "We were just small-town folks. Owned our little home, with its garden and flowers. All the people knew and loved us, were our friends."

She gulped, wiped her wet eyes, ran on:

"That's one of the things that's hurt me so here—no friends."

Wyndham was squeezing the little cold hands.

"You poor baby! Oh, if I'd only known!"

"And then, in a day, all was changed. Daddy was killed in a wreck, mother died from shock. When friends looked into daddy's affairs, they had to tell me the truth. I was penniless but for the little house and the acre of land. On advice of these friends, I sold the home, took the money—what was left after the funeral expenses were paid—and entered a business school.

"New York, with its wonderful opportunities, beckoned. I—" She broke off, choked down the sob in her throat, hurried on: "You thought—a while ago—that I was a diet crank. Far from it. I'm not the well-to-do-girl that you tried to make me. I'm just another down-and-outer. I'm absolutely alone in the world. No job. Not practically, but actually, broke. This morning I went to Battery Park—with the Hudson River as my final destination."

She looked appealingly at Wyndham, white-faced, grim.

"But don't ever think I'm a coward," she continued. "I've tried. Look at the soles on these shoes!"

She held up her foot.

"I've walked, walked, until I felt as though I'd drop. I've tried, oh, God! how I've tried!"

Her shoulders were shaking violently. With an angry hand she dashed the tears from her eyes.

"That's what makes me so furious!" she flung at him. "Here you are, a man, with all kinds of opportunities, puppying down and declaring that, because you can't do what you want to, you're going to become a common sneak thief! Oh, Harvey Wyndham, for shame!"

"Audrey—"

IGNORING a dozen onlookers, Wyndham flung his arms around her.

"Here! This is all I've got." He was fumbling with his watch chain. "Mother—gave it to me—and I've hung onto it through thick and thin. But now—you take it!"

He shoved the timepiece into her icy hands.

"I owe you more than that anyway, since you used to work for me and I never even knew it. Sell this watch. It's worth a hundred. Maybe they'll give you twenty-five on it. That'll be enough to hold you up until you do land a

job. Or—take the money and go home. Home to the little town where everybody's your friend. To the folks that know and love you. Out in the country where people have hearts—not concrete inside of 'em!"

He was clinging to her.

"Audrey, you know I love you," he continued eagerly, "and I need you so much. If any one says there's no such thing as love at first sight, I'll tell them different. Honey, don't ever get it into your head that it was accident that I spoke to you this morning. Not a bit of it. I saw you come in. Kept my eye on you. Why? Because I loved you. I needed you. Wanted you more than anything in all the world. And all the time I was in mortal fear that the crowd would separate us—part us forever. And then — the Hell-benders!"

He laughed ruefully, bent lower.

"I'm going to go straight, Audrey. Your fine, clean soul has given me a new vision. I'm going to get an honest job—even if it's only digging ditches!"

He sat silent while two or three gulls soared overhead, screaming. Then:

"Audrey, I can't let you go out of my life. I—need you. I—" he stopped altogether, frowning. "And yet, how can I ask you to be my wife? What have I to offer—other than my love and," wretchedly, "love never paid the groceryman."

"I'd never leave you, Harvey," she said tenderly. "Don't you understand? I love you, too—oh, so much! We'll get along, dear, just you and I. You know the old saying, 'Love will find a way.'"

Their hands touched, tingled at the magnetism of that contact, and remained together.

There, on the white beach at Coney Island the waves advanced and receded ceaselessly, ships passed dimly on the horizon, and an occasional sea gull wheeled overhead.

The mild November sun sank in a blaze of glory, while the man and girl, oblivious of everything else in the world, sat huddled together on the boardwalk.

Hand in hand, heart to heart, they looked into each other's eyes filled with the rapture that comes but once in a lifetime on the wings of new-found love.

AUDREY'S faith in their future was vindicated. Love *did* find a way. Jonathan Frisby, Harvey's former partner, made restitution of the brokerage firm's money which he had "borrowed" to gamble on the stock market, the firm was put on its feet again, and Harvey Wyndham was soon riding the crest of prosperity.

"But even if we were as poor as church mice, we'd still be rich in each other's love, wouldn't we, honey?" Harvey asked his deliriously happy bride just after the ceremony.

"Silly! You *know* we would!"

The girl stood up in the taxi to shake the rice off her pretty traveling suit as Harvey glanced at the tickets for Bermuda to make sure that the last detail of their honeymoon was complete.

Madeleine turned fearfully. In the doorway a dark, incredibly handsome man stood with his arms folded

Breath o' Love

The quest of a strange perfume leads Madeleine through oriental intrigue and black trickery—to love

By Sophie Wenzel Ellis

MADELEINE snatched the telephone receiver from its hook and gave a number breathlessly.

"That you, Armand?" Her rich, vibrant voice thrilled with suppressed excitement. "Come over—right away. I've got it, Armand! I've *got* it!"

She rushed back to the laboratory, a small room between her father's bedroom and her own. When she opened the door a cloud of strangely fascinating fragrance billowed warmly from an open jar, thrilling every nerve in her slender, vital body.

In this perfumed jar a prize of fifty thousand francs, offered by a famous Paris perfumer, might be waiting for her and Armand Duchesne; and Madeleine needed the money desperately.

For five years, ever since Professor Illington had resigned as professor of

chemistry in a noted college in one of New York's suburbs, to engage in research work which had not proved successful or profitable, Madeleine had made a living for two in their joint laboratory, producing face creams and individually blended perfumes for beauty parlors and private customers.

She had done well until six months ago, when her father, assisting her with the tests which later had developed into the contents of the fragrant jar, had been blinded by a queer explosion.

Now every penny she could spare went to eye specialists, who offered hope that the professor might recover his sight, if an expensive operation were performed. Winning her half of the fifty thousand francs would solve several extremely serious problems.

She hovered over the jar and breathed deeply of its intoxicating incense, with all the delight of the connoisseur.

"It's magical!" she sighed. "It's moonlight and kisses and nightingale's song in a Persian garden!"

Her beautiful face softened. Exotic romance swam in her thoughts—romance that matched the warm allurement of her own black eyes, which would not have looked out of place over the thick folds of a Turkish veil. The strange, passionate quality of her beauty won her customers as frequently as the dainty perfection of the products she made.

A patter of knocks sounded against the door.

"Come in, Armand!" she called.

THE tall young man who entered greeted her eagerly, but Madeleine turned away impatiently. She was fed up on such hunger as smoldered in his clear blue eyes. She disliked blond good looks in men. Why couldn't Armand Duchesne look like a real Frenchman?

Standing in the door, with the sunshine on his wavy hair, his tanned face slightly flushed, his jaw square over his John Barrymore collar, he seemed more like a football star of her father's college than the New York representative of a famous Paris perfumer.

"And so," he said triumphantly, "the *enfleurage* process worked on the *azalea viscosa* blossoms I sent you! They did the trick, didn't they?"

"Yes, it was just the touch we needed. Here's the original furnished by Benet, and here's mine. Can you detect the slightest difference?"

She opened a bottle displaying the label of the noted French perfumer and waved it delicately under Armand's nose. He closed his blue eyes and sniffed long and ecstatically, first from the bottle in her hand, then from the jar near the tiny still.

"Gosh! You've got it!"

Madeleine smiled. His attempts at American slang sounded whimsical in his slightly accented voice, which turned the sound of "th" into a softly slurred "z."

"It's as oriental and maddening as you, Madeleine!" he went on excitedly. "I know from experience." He made a wry face. "The very breath of love—that's what it is!"

"And I'll call it Breath o' Love! Wouldn't that sound wonderful in French—*Haleine d'Amour?*"

"Gosh! Benet ought to give you an extra bonus for suggesting that!"

"You talk as if the prize is only mine! You furnished the chance, you know, when your company distributed samples of that unknown perfume among laboratories in different parts of the world. But for you they never

would have heard about my little outfit; and perhaps some other American perfume chemist would have discovered that our common swamp azalea was the missing link needed to duplicate their delicious samples. Thanks, Armand!"

HER black eyes untangled their full, soft depths from the sweeping lashes and looked into his blue ones. Armand swallowed hard and flushed, as he always did when she looked at him like that.

"I consider myself the luckiest fellow in the world to be able to help you, honey," he said; "but who'd have thought, when Benet offered fifty thousand francs to any one who discovered how to make that stuff, that a kid of a girl would win the prize?"

"We haven't won the prize yet." A shadow saddened Madeleine's beautiful face. "There might be a slight variance in my formula that our cloyed senses do not catch; or the azalea attar might not remain uniform. I've worked with perfumes long enough to expect almost anything when we vary from the usual combinations of patchouli, ylang-ylang, rose, sandalwood, and so on down the line. We'd better give our formula a few more tests before sending in a sample."

"What would you do?" A worried frown wrinkled Armand's brow. "Do you think we could fail, after all? There does seem to be a jinx following this stuff. There was your father blinded during your first experiments, when that unknown chemical got among the bottles of imported essences; and I've heard it whispered that a murder was committed over procuring the samples that Benet sent out. I wonder where in thunder Benet found the stuff, anyway!"

"Doesn't any one know?"

"Not that I can discover. The whole affair is shrouded in mystery."

"But Benet distributed the samples broadcast, so that flowers in different parts of the world could be used in the experiments."

"It was the only thing they could do. Their own experts tried for months to get the formula. It's oriental, of course, and some unknown eastern flower that approximates the azalea probably stumped them."

"WE might be fooling ourselves that we have it," mused Madeleine. "Do you care if I take samples of the original and of ours to a customer of mine—a native of Cairo who married a New York architect? She is seeped in oriental perfume lore, and has an olfactory sense of extreme delicacy. She could tell us instantly if we are right."

"Go ahead, honey; but remember to use ordinary caution in telling folks what we are doing."

"It doesn't matter so much, does it? Perfume can't be subjected to chemical analysis, unless it is totally synthetic. So long as we keep the formula secret we're safe."

"You can't be too sure. There's no telling where Benet got the original. Rare perfumes of secret formula are like valuable diamonds — dangerously enticing to those who lust for them. You'll be careful, Madeleine?"

"Yes, foolisher!" she replied, smiling almost maternally at this golden-haired boy whose blue eyes darkened whenever he looked at her.

"Because, Madeleine, you know I love you!" His voice caught, with a little sob. "And I shan't give up hope until you're married to some other fellow. I shan't even go away, no matter

how many times you give me my walking ticket."

"Please, Armand!" She could scarcely keep back the tears, for, even as she uttered the words, his finely cut lips settled into the sensitive, boyish droop that always made her want to put her arm across his broad shoulders. "Why can't you let our wonderful friendship remain as it used to be?"

"You're expecting the impossible." He spoke bitterly. "You could love me if you would let yourself. You're fighting. You're saving your heart for some spectacular, storybook romance—the kind that doesn't happen in real life."

Madeleine fingered the dimple in her chin.

"You're right, Armand. There is something in my nature that shrinks from homely domesticity. It would be dangerous for me to marry a boy like you. I have genuine affection for you, but no surge of the passion that I shall some day feel."

"Do you know the fellow now?" he demanded jealously.

"Of course not!" She laughed throatily. "I'm absolutely heart-whole."

"Then there's still a chance for me!" he said triumphantly. "We'll spend part of our prize money on a gorgeous honeymoon. Just wait!"

AFTER Armand had gone, Madeleine walked over to a small mirror in the laboratory and thoughtfully surveyed herself.

"What's wrong with me?" she sighed. "Why can't I love him? He's everything a normal girl should want—handsome, cultured, intelligent, from a fine old family, and connected with one of the largest perfume manufacturers of France. He's the most eligible sweetheart I've had in my twenty poverty-stricken years, yet I have the nerve to reject him!"

In the glass she saw her own strange eyes and the quality of passion they gave to her piquant face.

"Some day," she mused, "I shall probably fall in love with a worthless, fascinating scamp!"

A slight shiver passed over her, an eerie sensation of foreboding. To shake it off, she went to work again. From a glass cabinet she took an odd perfume bottle, a fierce-looking black man whose uplifted sword was stopper and applicator rod for the precious scent within.

Beautiful Ayesha Douglas would derive added enjoyment from perfume held in such a bottle. Madeleine filled the bottle with Breath o' Love and put it into her bag, together with a small bottle of the original furnished by Benet.

Then, because Ayesha Douglas and her richly decorated home appealed to all that was fantastic and exotic in Madeleine, she donned her scarlet and black georgette crape dress, which made her look like a gypsy.

Behind her ears and on the black, silky wings of her eyebrows she brushed an infinitesimal touch of the perfume over which she had labored for months.

Although she had been almost constantly seeped in its intricately compounded elements, she never wearied of it. The merest whiff still set the blood racing through her pulses and filmed her heavily shaded eyes with dreams.

She had telephoned Mrs. Douglas before leaving home, and had received the beautiful Persian's permission to call with the perfume. She found no difficulty in gaining admittance to the

sumptuous gray granite house, famous even in New York for its rather rococo splendor.

When the butler admitted her into the library to wait for Mrs. Douglas, she sighed with pleasure and yearning over the richness and exotic beauty of the furnishings.

Curled up in a cushioned seat was a sleek black Persian cat, which regarded her sleepily.

SHE took from her bag the bizarre perfume bottle containing Breath o' Love and put it on a carved ebony table. The glass figure of the Ethiopian, with his drawn scimitar, fitted well into the luxurious room.

She had scarcely set the bottle down when a spitting sound from the cat's chair took her attention. The animal was either frightened or enraged. On its arched back the black fur bristled, and its green, round eyes glared furiously at the bottle.

Madeleine laughed.

"Here, kitty!" she called softly, reaching out her hand to pat the animal's curved back. "It won't hurt you, kitty!"

Before she could stay the cat, however, it leaped, quick as a flash of black lightning, landed on the table, and with one sweep of its paw sent the glass Ethiopian flying across the room.

The bottle struck against the sharp leg of a table and fell shattered to the floor, its contents welling forth in a flood of overpowering fragrance that made Madeleine stagger and gasp.

Her precious sample!

Before she could recover from her surprise and vexation, behind her a deep, vibrant voice breathed a strange word:

"Allah!"

Madeleine turned fearfully.

In the door stood a tall, swarthy man, robed in scarlet and white, with a gorgeously embroidered burnoose wound about his head.

She rubbed her eyes and stared again, expecting to see him vanish; but he stood with his arms folded, his dark, incredibly handsome face tilted slightly upward, his fine nostrils quivering with delight over the heavy, sensuous odor.

For a long, puzzled moment Madeleine wondered if the intoxicating fragrance had gone to her brain and made her see one of the colorful oriental people of whom she had often thought during her experiments. Then, for the first time, the man seemed to see her. His flashing eyes, as darkly passionate as her own, swept over her appealing face and exquisite figure in a look that clung. His sudden smile touched a little chord hidden deep within her.

"Ah, *mademoiselle!*" he said, his deep, foreign-flavored voice peculiarly gentle and suave. He took a step nearer. "You will pardon my stare. I thought at first you must be an houri, trailing that so delicious fragrance from your finger tips!"

"And I," said Madeleine, surprising herself by what she said to this swarthy stranger, "thought that you were a jinni released from the perfume bottle!"

"Then we are already well acquainted!" He bowed low. "I am Ismail Sufi, brother to Mrs. Douglas." He came nearer, and his handsome face lighted with new interest. "I saw that scared pussy break the bottle. It is yours, *mademoiselle?*"

His tone, for all its suavity, was a bit too eager. Madeleine looked ruefully at the broken pieces on the floor.

"I brought it for your sister," she

said. "Now I'm afraid she'll never enjoy it."

"BUT the perfume, *mademoiselle* —where did you get it? And may I ask if there is any more?"

"At my laboratory, yes."

Ismail Sufi started.

"You mean you make it?"

"Yes."

Mercy, he was handsome, in exactly the way she admired most!

"But how did you stumble on this—"

He caught himself suddenly. "The formula, *mademoiselle* — may I ask where you got it?"

Madeleine hesitated. She scarcely knew how much to tell this too appealing brother of Ayesha Douglas.

"I have attempted to copy a certain oriental perfume," she parried. "I brought that sample to your sister, together with some of the original, to get her opinion. She is the best judge of oriental perfume I know."

"She should be a good judge." Again Madeleine felt a subtle thrill as her eyes were tangled in his. "I have coached her since we were children. You do not know, of course, that Ismail Sufi is somewhat famous in Cairo and in my own Iran as a perfume connoisseur. I am in New York to gather material for a monograph on modern perfume. That explains my dress." He picked up an end of his burnoose in slender brown fingers. "I always wear it while writing. I am too temperamental to think in trousers and collar."

"Then you can tell me if the perfume still coming from my broken bottle is a duplicate of this."

From her bag she drew Benet's sample and handed it to him. He took it, narrowed his eyes, and breathed delicately from the cork. Then, closing the bottle again, he tested the scent on the carpet, his nostrils contracting like a hound's.

Suddenly, with a strange gesture that was almost despairing, he held out a lean brown hand that trembled.

"Allah!" he muttered. "It is so!"

He stood with bowed head, musing. When again he faced Madeleine, a new light burned in his dark eyes.

"Will you not tell me where you got the original?" he pleaded.

Madeleine hesitated. Then she remembered how Benet had distributed samples to laboratories all over the world. There was no use in attempting to shroud the perfume in too much mystery. She told him, mentioning the offer of a prize.

"And you are the only one who has worked out the formula, *mademoiselle?*"

"I believe so."

"THEN you will sell it to me, instead of taking a chance on losing your prize?" He had a way of making the simplest words he uttered sound like poetry. "I offer ten thousand good American dollars for your formula!"

Madeleine shook her head.

"I can't sell," she said.

"Twenty-five thousand, *mademoiselle!*"

Madeleine almost staggered. That was far more than Benet's prize—and she might not win it.

The Persian noticed her hesitation.

"You'd better accept, *mademoiselle.* Danger and ill luck sometimes cling to perfumes of the East, when they come to the West. In Iran, in Egypt, in all lands of the sun, perfume like this grips us as a religion. In the Sox Atarin, the perfume bazaar of Cairo,

I have seen a black brute of a Nubian spend a week's wages for a single drop of rare perfume. Yes, *mademoiselle*—among us Mohammedans, to whom wine is forbidden, the scent of the rose and the jasmine is our intoxicant. Will you sell?"

His entire brown muscular body seemed to plead.

"I cannot sell," repeated Madeleine, turning from the magnetic charm of his strange eyes. "A friend who helped me owns a half interest."

"But would not this friend be willing to part with it for—thirty thousand dollars?"

Madeleine put one white hand over her eyes. Was she dreaming—drunk? A scene like this could not be happening in New York!

"This friend — when will you see him?" went on Ismail Sufi.

"To-night."

"And when may I see you again, *madcmoiselle?*"

Again the caressing tone in his voice caught her attention. It was as if he were conveying to her some secret message that he dared not utter. She could not resist looking up at him, and she found his disturbing gaze on her face, on her round white throat.

"I can call you in the morning," she said shyly.

"But may I not come to your laboratory? I would like so very much to see it. There's my monograph, you know. I may find inspiration for it." He paused as a soft footfall crossed the threshold. "Ah, here's Ayesha to introduce us properly!"

WHEN Madeleine went down the marble front steps she tingled with the knowledge that she would again see this Ismail Sufi. His handsome face filled her thoughts more than the strange offer he had made her.

Before going home she went to Armand's office, and told him that Ayesha's brother, as well as Ayesha, had pronounced Breath o' Love an exact duplicate of the original formula.

Armand was beside himself with happiness.

"I'll take it to Paris myself!" he almost shouted. "There's a boat leaving in the morning that I can catch. I want to present it in person, to tell old Louis Benet how we used the *azalea viscosa,* and to convince him that it will be easy to secure the attar in plentiful supply."

"Wait, Armand," hesitated Madeleine. "Perhaps you won't want to make the journey to Paris when I tell you this."

And she outlined her strange conversation with Ismail Sufi. As she talked she did not notice the storm brewing in Armand's face. He was silent for a long moment before he exploded.

"You'd sell it to that Arab sheik, would you?" he shouted. "You'd sell it, after we've labored and planned for months, and dreamed of the glory that we'd win?"

"But thirty thousand dollars, Armand! Think how much more that is than the fifty thousand francs offered by Benet—*if* we win."

"And you'd have me double cross my firm?" His scorn lashed her. "I'm surprised that you even argued with him!"

"But perhaps we can get him to raise his bid still higher. Must we permit foolish ideals to keep us poor? I need the money, Armand!" She sobbed. "Daddy suffered so last night!"

In a moment Armand had taken her

soft hand and pressed it contritely against his cheek.

"Madeleine, I'm a brute. If I thought there was any danger of losing the prize, I'd tell you to go ahead and sell the formula; but we can't afford to make an enemy of the largest perfume dealer in the world just for the sake of a little more money. There would be lawsuits, you know." He paused and eyed her beautiful flushed face hungrily. "You know, dear, I still dream of the day when you and I may have a laboratory of our own as great as Benet's."

His sensitive mouth smiled tenderly, with the boyish curl of the lips that always touched her; but before she could frame contrite words, another face came between her and Armand's fair good looks—a swarthy face whose dark eyes made her heart lift madly. She parted from Armand without giving him the good-by kiss for which he pleaded.

He covered the keyboard with his brown hand. "Listen, Madeleine," he demanded, "you know I love you, want you for my wife?"

THE next morning Ismail Sufi visited her laboratory. Even in American clothes, his grace and alien coloring stirred her imagination.

In the costume of his native land he had looked like a character from the "Arabian Nights"; in blue serge and white shirt, his finely chiseled face was the duplicate of an old bronze coin. And now, with his head freed from

the burnoose, allowing his black hair to wave back in a thick pompadour, he was years younger than she had thought him yesterday.

Her father was as much captivated with the Persian as she. The blind professor had few contacts with educated minds, and to meet Ismail Sufi, with his eastern culture and his broad education was a rare pleasure.

After the brief half hour that Madeleine spent with Ismail in the laboratory, she left the two men together, while she prepared luncheon.

While she was bustling around in her little kitchen—which adjoined the combination living and dining room, where the men sat—she could hear Ismail telling her father about his vast cotton plantation on the Nile, his ships that bore treasures in baled silks and rugs, his palace in Cairo. They talked about the ancient culture of Egypt, about the architecture of Teheran; and they talked of Ismail's picturesque religion, Mohammedanism.

Madeleine moved softly among her dishes. She wanted to hear every word that Ismail uttered, for now he was talking with an earnestness which revealed that he was bound up heart and soul in the rites and teachings of Islam.

"My religion influences my entire life, as it does with all good Mohammedans," he said earnestly. "I would die ten million times to accomplish one little service to it."

It was well that Madeleine listened so carefully, for the revelations of that conversation were later to explain Ismail's dramatic actions.

A FEW days later Ismail's call was repeated, for Professor Illington had urged him to come again. This time Madeleine had more time with him, and before he left she was completely captivated by his alien charm.

She spent a restless, sleepless night. What did she know of this warm-eyed, romantic Persian, who already had begun to whisper poetic blandishments that thrilled her as Armand's most impassioned speech never did?

Ismail never mentioned Madeleine's perfume now. She had told him that Armand had gone to Paris with it, and he seemed to have forgotten it.

When the Persian called the third time he frankly told Professor Illington that he wished to pay court to Madeleine. He told it with Madeleine present and blushing furiously.

"I dare not yet ask her to be my wife," he said simply, with his heart in his eyes as he looked at her. "As you say in America, it is up to me to sell myself to her—to you both. I want to do so many things for the two of you!" He smiled his rarest smile. "It is a joy to me to know that my wealth can help—can even buy eyesight for you, professor!"

The father lifted his blind face.

"Her happiness is my chief desire, Ismail Sufi. As for me, nature is already getting me prepared for a long stretch of blindness. I can feel my senses of hearing and touch grow more delicate. Madeleine must not sacrifice herself on my account. You won't, daughter?"

"Oh, daddy!" She was out of her chair, with her arms around his neck and her young cheek hiding its blushes against his thick gray hair. "You'll see again some day, no matter what happens. I might win Benet's prize, you know."

She tumbled the words out hurriedly, to hide her confusion. Was there ever stranger wooing of an American girl in 1929? Yet Ismail's frank as-

sertion was but a part of his queer personality—the personality that kept her awake at night and often, during her work, made her pause to dream.

Nine days after Armand had left for Paris, Madeleine got a cablegram from him. Its contents did not really surprise her.

Breath o' Love had won the prize! Benet also offered an additional bonus of five hundred francs for the name "*Haleine d'Amour.*" Armand wanted her to send the formula immediately. He had lost his copy when a pickpocket stole his wallet.

Even the terse cablegram had the flavor of Armand's impetuous boyishness. Madeleine smiled tenderly and somewhat sadly. Armand would receive a great hurt soon—a hurt that would make his sensitive mouth quiver and fill his blue eyes with tears; for Madeleine knew now what she would say when Ismail formally asked her to be his wife.

Immediately after she read Armand's message she called Ismail. She thrilled over his deep, musical voice when he said:

"Hello!"

Had she sent the formula to Paris, he asked? She told him that she would do so that very afternoon. Would she not prepare one more batch of the perfume, so that he might have a little for himself? She promised to do so. The finished ingredients were in the laboratory, ready for the final blend. Benet would not mind if she made a small stock for herself, provided she did not keep a duplicate of the formula.

MADELEINE was at her typewriter, making a clean copy of the formula for Benet, when, looking through the window she saw Ismail's tall, slender form come up the garden path and pass the laboratory window as he went to the front door. She waved to him to come in.

He kissed her hand gravely, and then stood watching her complete her typing.

"It's for Benet?" he asked.

She nodded absently.

Suddenly he leaned toward her and covered the typewriter keyboard with his brown hand.

"Listen, Madeleine!" he demanded. "You know I want you for my wife—that I love you?"

He raised her face to his and kissed her full on the lips.

"I want something, dearest. My giving you thirty thousand, fifty thousand, even one hundred thousand dollars for the formula means nothing to you, for when you are my wife you will have my whole fortune to enjoy; but, my dear, won't you give me the formula?"

She trembled over his nearness, yet had the courage to say:

"The formula is not mine only, Ismail. Armand Duchesne has his half share. If I refused to send it to Benet now he would be disgraced, and might even lose his position. I can't treat my friend like that."

Ismail pushed her from him roughly and leaped up to pace back and forth, with agitation showing in every nervous gesture of his body.

"But if you knew, Madeleine! I must tell you. Send that formula to Benet and you will take a part in the most dastardly theft that has ever been perpetrated. You will also loose vengeance and bloodshed upon Benet's entire establishment."

He stopped in front of her and turned his blazing eyes full upon her.

"Madeleine! Benet's agent stole that perfume, and I know where!"

"Where?" She had caught his excitement now.

"From a Mohammedan shrine held in the utmost reverence by all the faithful, where the secret of making this perfume has been kept inviolate for centuries."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know?" He looked at her incredulously. "I, who have journeyed to Mecca twice, and who love my religion even more than I love perfume? I, the greatest authority on eastern essences, have been commissioned to discover if the thief who stole Benet's perfume ever found the formula for — Mohammed's tears. That's what this perfume is! Listen to the story!"

HIS voice had dropped to a tense, unnatural tone that was little more than a hoarse whisper.

"Mohammed the Prophet acknowledged that he loved two things best—women and perfume. It is said that when he was tempted in Paradise by a beautiful virgin, he turned aside his face and wept; and an angel caught his tears in a vessel, which she carried to earth and set in a cave on the edge of the Desert of Luth, where it was guarded by a hermit. The faithful were permitted to breathe its divine fragrance. Then the hermit discovered how to duplicate the holy tear drops with precious attars and spices. Nowhere in the world was there such a perfume. The secret of its making was given only to the keeper of the shrine, who, feeling death approach, always passed it on to his successor."

"And Benet's agents stole some from this shrine, you say?" asked Madeleine.

"Yes, and left one of their men behind with a knife in his back. There will be other murders if you send the formula you have discovered to Benet. Good Mohammedans will not permit the secret to leave the shrine at Luth. Give me the formula, dearest, that I may destroy it!"

His eyes burned into hers with a light that was fanatical.

"I can't, Ismail! It's a pretty legend, but it won't keep Benet from eventually getting the formula. I may as well be the fortunate one."

"You shan't!" His swarthy face was white now—white and drawn. "Give me the formula!"

"No."

"What? My promised wife defies me?"

In that crushing moment Madeleine remembered that the women of the Orient are but chattels to their husbands. This handsome Persian expected her even now to yield to his command. Her small body tensed. She had a quick vision of a fair-haired boy whose courtly way with women had been taught him by a gentle French mother.

"I'm not your promised wife!"

"Ah!" His lips drew back from his white teeth. "So! Ayesha was right! I should never have cast honorable eyes on a little working girl of New York. You refuse to accept my forty thousand good American dollars for your formula?"

"I do."

"I am sorry!" His manner was suddenly gentle. "What is it your Kipling says?—'East is East and West is West.' Perhaps it is so. I say good-by to you. But wait! As a fair exchange for a tiny bottle of the perfume from the stolen formula, I will give you this—a scent which I hope will often make you think of one who loved you well."

He reached deep into a pocket and drew forth a small bottle.

Madeleine hesitated. The changing moods of this impetuous Asiatic were more than she could understand.

"Here!" he offered. "Tell me, is not this delicious?"

Seizing her little crumpled handkerchief which lay beside her typewriter, he moistened it from the bottle and put it quickly to her nose. For one delirious moment she sensed a fragrance of overpowering sweetness, which sent through her veins a creeping, languid pleasure. Then she felt herself floating—floating—

WHEN Madeleine opened her eyes again she was slumped in a chair, with her body supported against a table close by. She was alone.

For a full minute she could not collect her thoughts. Then, in a horrible flood of understanding, she knew. Ismail had anæsthetized her!

Her eyes leaped toward her typewriter, where she had left the half written copy of the formula. Copy and original were gone; but on her desk was a little heap of ashes—burned paper. From one small undestroyed corner she recognized all that remained of the formula. And there was not another copy in existence!

She screamed faintly. Never would she be able to write that complicated formula from memory, wherein rare ingredients were blended with infinite delicacy, drop by drop.

Half mad, she seized the telephone and called a taxi. The trip to the home of Ismail's sister was agonizingly slow. A traffic jam held them up for half an hour. When she reached her destination it was almost night. Neither Ismail nor Ayesha was at home.

She waited an hour before Ayesha came in. Ismail? He was gone. Where? He had left in his yacht. Perhaps he was returning to Cairo. One could never tell about Ismail.

Madeleine was in despair. It was no use to tell Ayesha about her brother's act, for she could not help.

There was but one thing left for her to do. She must cable Armand—dear, stanch Armand, who had warned her against Ismail. She sent the cablegram, and then went home to serve dinner to a lonely blind man who would probably never see again, because there was no money for a certain expensive operation.

Madeleine's greatest sorrow, however, was not the loss of the prize, but her fear that Armand would despise her. She couldn't stand it if he ceased loving her.

The next morning, before she had finished breakfast, Armand's answer arrived. She was afraid to tear the envelope open. She could not bear his disappointment. She was glad that her father could not see her pressing the envelope against her cheek, while tears coursed down her face.

If she only had Armand with her, that she might erase the droop of his lips with the kiss for which he had so often begged her and which he had never received!

At last she forced herself to read the terse message:

Do not worry, honey. Found my wallet with formula intact through newspaper ad. Bringing you wedding veil from Francine. Cable if O. K.

And, laughing and crying at the same moment, Madeleine tumbled to the telephone and dictated her brief answer to a cable office:

O. K. and hurry!

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts."

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As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

Girls' clubs or organizations in New York or vicinity may secure Mr. Fraser's services for an evening's lecture by addressing him care this magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City.

MANY times I wish it were possible for some of you girls to be right here beside me at my desk. It would afford me the greatest satisfaction just to talk to you informally about your vocational problems and love affairs.

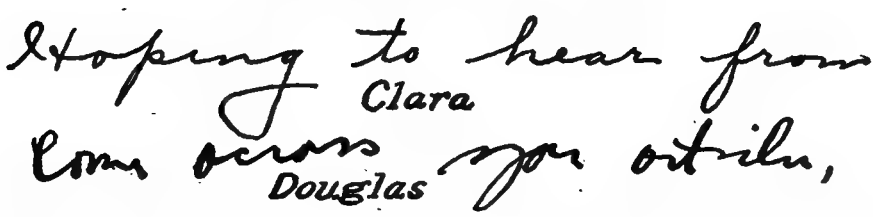
Since this is out of the question, however, I shall continue to give you my best attention through the medium of pen, ink and paper. But if you have problems don't forget, girls, that I've got some too!

Quite a number of my fair correspondents must think I'm a mind-reader, or the international champion of guessers, judging by the way they write to me. All I get from some of

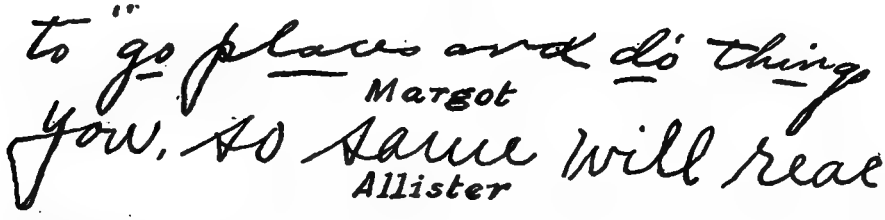
them is their name and address written in pencil, without even a "Thank you," or a two-cent stamp for return postage.

From all who wish my advice I require *six* lines of handwriting in *ink*, with name and address on the coupon. Please help me, won't you?

SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS

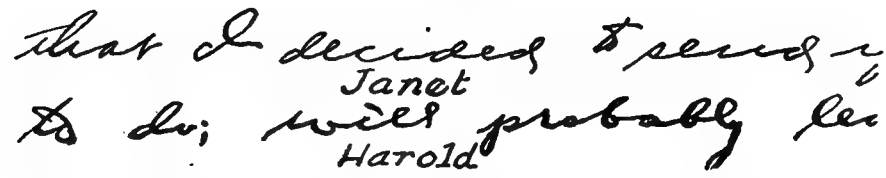


(Miss Clara J., Cleveland, Ohio.) As a business man Douglas is a success, but as a lover he would be a pretty cold proposition. It simply isn't in the man to bill and coo, as no doubt you would expect a fellow to do. Your "complaints," as you call them, about Douglas, are not quite consistent. A man of the world, as your sweetheart happens to be, is usually more concerned about the tickers in Wall Street than the love tickings of a girl's heart. It has ever been thus, so why look for plums on a gooseberry bush, or sentimentalism in a stock broker's office. Your "preaching" to Douglas will be of no avail unless the gentleman himself chooses to change his method of thinking. You shouldn't expect impossibilities; the man was just born that way. Before you go any farther, Clara, you would do well to sit down some night, and ask yourself whether you could go through life living with a money-making machine, as your fiancé seemingly is. Could dollars and cents take the place of love and contentment, when you get married? And is your married life just another jump out of the frying pan into the fire? Personally, I think you are too good a girl to throw yourself away on a man like Douglas. You could do far better if you would only stop and think, and have a little patience. Why should you be in such a hurry to get into double harness? If I were you I would take another five years of single blessedness, and by that time the right man will happen along.



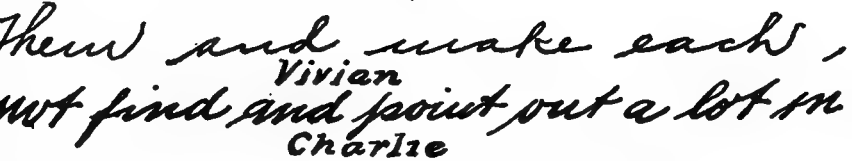
(Miss Margot L. B., White Plains, New York.) In my opinion your choice of sweetheart is a very happy one. Allister seems to be a boy who has been brought up in a refined environment. His education has been

well taken care of, and his imaginative power enables him to live in the realm of higher and better things than business and finance. As doubtless you are aware, Allister has a very wide outlook on life. His frank, manly ways have been the means of adding many worthwhile people to his list of friends. He is sentimental, but not too much so. He is affectionate, but only shows it under proper conditions. He is witty and original when the company is congenial. To come to yourself, Margot, your mind is of the analytical type. You are more gushing with your affection than your boy friend is, and likely to go "off the handle" a little too quickly for your own good. You would be well advised to have more patience, both with Allister and with those at home. Egotism also runs in your nature, which neutralizes many of your good points, and extravagance in the spending of money is quite evident in your handwriting. Though Allister has an unusual amount of self-dependence, he is not so good at standing up for his own rights. A little more backbone would not come amiss to him. Be that as it may, I would not hesitate to say that you are a well-matched pair.



(Miss Janet P., Tulsa, Oklahoma.) I am rather doubtful about your choice of sweetheart, Janet. In the first place, I think there is too much disparity in your ages. And secondly, Harold doesn't seem to be a fellow who has much in common with you. Your spiritual nature, which, most of the times, gravitates to the more worthwhile things, could never be in tune with materialism, which is what Harold craves. Sunsets, music, poetry, and the like go over Harold's head, like water over a duck's back. He is of the earth, earthy, with dollars and cents as his alpha and omega—the sum total of his existence. In the choosing of a husband one has to weigh the pros and cons very carefully. Physical attraction is a poor and dangerous criterion to go by, when the best part of your life is at stake. Too many of your sisters have been led "on the ice" by a good-looking man. Too many lawyers are enabled to run about in their limousines by these self-same optical illusions of which you seem to be just another victim. Before it is too late give Harold the once-over again, and see if I'm not right. For some reason or another, this young man has all the earmarks of a deceitful person. A fellow who is full of vindictiveness and revenge. An impatient and passionate nature, which must be fed with the coarser pleasures of life. You, on the other hand, have a motherly disposition, kindliness of spirit, and a love which seeks its consummation in motherhood. I have dwelt particularly on Harold's weaknesses, for evidently you are either ignorant of them, or you have shut your eyes to them. All marriageable couples would do well to re-

member when courting to keep their eyes wide open, but after they are married it pays better to keep them half shut. Think this over.

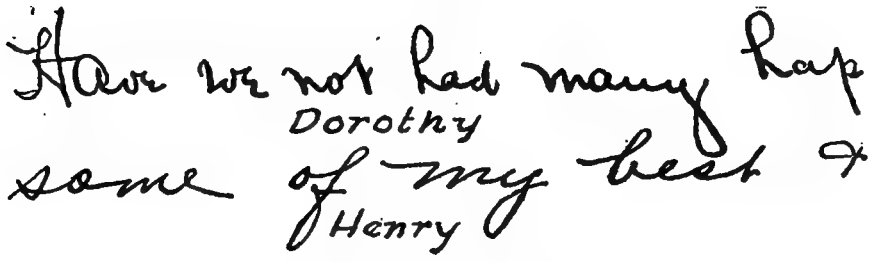


(Vivian M., Halifax, Nova Scotia.) You impress me as a very loving pair. Your likes and dislikes are pretty much on a par with each other. That is to say, up to a point they blend all right—but I see trouble ahead for you both, unless you get a real understanding before the wedding ceremony takes place. Have you ever noticed, Vivian, that Charlie is rather careful when it comes to money? Perhaps the poor boy cannot help it, since his forbears came from the land o' the heather. Though I wouldn't say that he is exactly miserly, at the same time he *is* thrifty and tight-fisted. The sort of fellow who would not only walk a mile for a camel, but who would walk fifty blocks to save ten cents on a hair cut. Then again, Charlie is a very nervous individual, even to the point of being supersensitive. A man of his temperament is not a pleasant companion at times. He gets fits of the blues, and the doldrums never seem to be far from the surface of his nature. He may not have shown it to you so far, Vivian, but Charlie is rather obstinate once his mind is made up. Your opinion would go for nothing when he started out to do anything. He would do it his own way and that's enough. Some folks who know him best doubtless put him down as mulish. I would myself, and then some. Regarding yourself, you are so different when it comes to your outlook on life. You are a broad-minded girl, who loves to spend and to have a good time. You have the faculty of making friends very quickly, and also for scattering sunshine wherever you go. Of the two, your nature is by far the better, and since you love each other sincerely, there is no reason in the world why you should not adjust your mentalities for the sake of your united happiness.

(Miss Madge S., San Antonio, Texas.) It is quite evident you have fallen in love with a good, go-ahead Irishman. A fellow who knows his way about in the world, and didn't forget to kiss the Blarney stone before he left the ould countrie. Pat is a fine sort of chap, and one who ought to make you very happy when you get married. He has a big Irish heart, and from what I gather from his clean-cut penmanship, he has had a good up-

bringing. He seems to be open and above board with everything. Of course you'll have to give him his own way pretty much, since he likes to have authority around the house. He also is inclined to be opinionated. Being allowed to air his views rather freely when he was younger, no doubt he expects you to give him the same amount of rope when you are married to him. This habit of bossing around is perhaps his worst foible. He is as romantic as they make them in county Cork, and as fond of a fight as any of his other countrymen. It's simply the nature of the beast, since they say "an Irishman is never at peace but when he's at war." As far as affection is concerned, you have your share of it all right. In fact, you are somewhat supersensitive about it. I'm afraid Pat will have to watch his p's and q's when it comes to giving you attention.

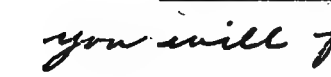
Your whole nature has been cast in a finer mold, and consequently you require to be handled with a good deal of care and diplomacy. I observe you are more of a dreamer than a hustler, and in this connection, I would warn you not to live "in the clouds" too much while Pat's around, otherwise a little cuss word, instead of a kiss, may drop from his Irish lips occasionally. Just watch your step with him, and you'll find him all right.



(Miss Dorothy McP., Montreal, Quebec.) I can quite understand why you and Henry are always in "hot water." If I mistake not, you are a most erratic and temperamental girl. You are up on the mountain tops one day, and down in the valleys the next. Your temper requires lots of pruning, and your patience is a scarce commodity. It is not in my province to be biased in my opinion about either of you, so what I say in this short analysis is merely the result of careful examination of your handwriting. I would call you a very difficult girl to manage. You are mannish in thought, and oftentimes set in your ideas. You have the supersensitiveness of an artist, and the touchiness of a little girl. Your love of appreciation is ridiculous, and this desire for change and novelty is nothing short of an obsession with you. Of course Henry is no angel, either, but I see in him many splendid traits of character which are missing in you. He is more consistent in his ways of living and thinking. His sentimental nature is not wanting by any means, neither is his sense of honesty and uprightness lacking in any way. If you are to be happy with this soberminded fellow, you will have to come off your perch, and be more tractable. No man in the world but would have

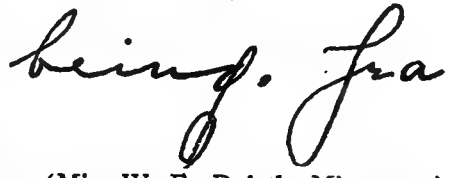
a dog's life living with a girl of your disposition. Think this over, and live and let live.

YOUR CAREER



(Miss C. R., East Orange, New Jersey.) A girl with your culture and analytical mind has a wonderful opportunity to make a name for herself in the legal profession. Your whole nature lends itself to this kind of work. For example, you are concentrative to a degree. Your power of penetration is acute. Your keenness of perception is above the average, and your memory is a splendid stand-by in times of emergency. When it comes to reasoning out a problem, your logic is as sound as a bell, and your arguments always carry weight with them. Your A's and O's speak for themselves when deliberation is necessary. So you see with all these essentials there is no reason in the world why you should not win a place for yourself among the attorneys of to-morrow. I see you are not a bit different from many of your sisters when it comes to talking. You would be there with the goods when the judge called upon you to address the court. Some persons would say that you had "a gift of the gab," and I honestly believe you have. This is no liability as far as you are concerned. A barrister without a vocabulary would be like plum pudding without the flour.

(Miss A. D. C., Charles Town, West Virginia.) I observe that you are a girl with a modest and quiet disposition. You are studious and observant, and belong to the class of good thinkers and sound reasoners. In the matter of a vocation, you would be invaluable as a librarian in some public organization, or in any bookseller's store. Since you are so well informed, your fund of information regarding books and their authors would come in handy to your customers. Another branch of work in the professional field suitable to a girl of your ability would be analytical chemistry. Your power of concentration would get full play in the laboratory, and in the conducting of scientific experiments. To come to another angle in your nature, you impress me as one who is fighting a hard and uphill battle against discouragement and disappointment. Under your present circumstances you are not getting a chance to "follow the gleam" which is urging you on to higher attainments. As a result you are moody and unhappy. Your outlook on life is circumscribed and narrow, and under such conditions your work will necessarily be mediocre. Before you can ever hope to succeed, a new environment is absolutely necessary to you.



(Miss W. F., Duluth, Minnesota.) You have what I call a telegraphic penmanship. Speed seems to be your whole object. You are physically active as well as mentally alert, and from that fact I would say you are cut out for the commercial field. You might not be aware of it, but the real estate

business would fit you to a T. You are such a practical-minded girl, with splendid force of character, you would "fear no foe in shining armor," but go right in and make the sale. You are not given to concentration very much. As a matter of fact you are more physical than mental. At the present moment you would make a poor housewife, and would have no patience with such petty things as moth balls or vacuum cleaners. You are a woman of the world, and as such you will make good. You have also business acumen enough to be a valuable employee in a department store, in the capacity of buyer. Your sagacity and "long-headedness" would be of great assistance here. Furthermore, you have the faculty of making friends quickly. You seem to be able to get what you want without much trouble. In the language of the street, you're "cute" in dress, manner, and personality.

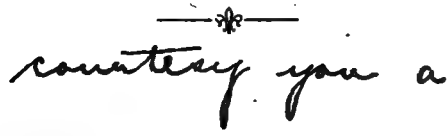
The Paper

(Miss L. B. N., Memphis, Tennessee.) You impress me as a very tidy, methodical little girl. Your round and well-spaced penmanship indicates constructive thinking and sound judgment. You are not a bit self-centered, neither are you conceited in the slightest degree. This is saying a great deal when I come to think that you belong to the feminine gender. You ought to be a big success as a governess, or as a social worker. Your frank, open manner must gain you many friends, and your will-power is sufficient to carry you to heights of achievement. I like your painstaking way, and your sense of humor. You appear also to be a very sentimental individual, and always tractable and amenable to the common influences of your surroundings. Your mental refinement is very pronounced, and your love for the inspirational most refreshing. Your will-power is something to be reckoned with, and your temper is worth the watching when things don't go your way. In either of these capacities I have just mentioned, your kindly quiet ways plus your adaptability would go far toward your success with children or grown-ups.

Handwriting, which kindly

(Miss Nellie R., Phoenix, Arizona.) I wouldn't hesitate a moment in advising you to give all your attention to your study of shorthand and typing this winter. Your concentrative mind and your fussiness about small details all lead me to think, Nellie, that some day soon your boss is to inform you that he wishes you to be his private secretary. Your education and your quiet, unobtrusive manner are splendid assets for such a position. You are simply "cut out" for the kind of office work which requires brains and common sense. And by the formation of your looped letters I see you have both. Moreover, you are no clock watcher. You believe in giving value for value received. Of course your present inexperience is only temporary, and as time goes on your lack of confidence will disappear. We all suffer from stage fright at one time or another, and you are no exception to the rule. No employer will bawl out any girl for wrong transcriptions if he sees she is doing her utmost to please, as I'm sure you will always do. There is one thing, however, Nellie, that I would caution

you against. Patience is a scarce commodity with you. You have no use for slow pokes around you. You do things quickly yourself, and you expect every one to be the same. Now cultivate self-control, and remember we are not all as clever nor as smart as Nellie R.



(Mrs. Jessie I. S., Charleston, South Carolina.) You would be very foolish, Jessie, to change your profession. Your handwriting tells me very distinctly that you are in your right job, that of private nursing. I notice you have great power of observation, a decisive manner, and a tactful way of handling problems. You would never be guilty of "losing your head" in a crisis. You have yourself well in hand, and have considerable patience. To get into business would only mean a transplanting of your interests, and a fresh start in life. You are far too old to take any such chances, and furthermore, I see nothing in your penmanship that would lead me to encourage you in this step. Interior decorating requires considerable artistic taste and creative power, and several other characteristics, which, I'm sorry to say, you don't possess. I agree that the constant strain of sitting by the bedside of the sick is sometimes too much for even the strongest individual, but nevertheless since this is your particular bent, and I feel it my duty to advise you to keep on keeping on. What I think you require more than anything else, is a good vacation. Try this course, and see how it works.

Girls' clubs and organizations in New York and vicinity can secure the services of John Fraser by writing to him care of this magazine. An evening's entertainment and instruction of surpassing interest is provided by Mr. Fraser's analyses.

If you belong to a club suggest to the other members that they set aside a meeting to be addressed by Mr. Fraser. Vocational problems of the members can be solved by having this expert in graphology analyze handwriting specimens. Simply address him care ALL-STORY, 280 Broadway, New York City.

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I enclose handwriting specimen for
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(Check which you prefer.)

Name.....

Street and No. .....

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Heart-to-Heart

Tell Your Love Troubles to

AGNES
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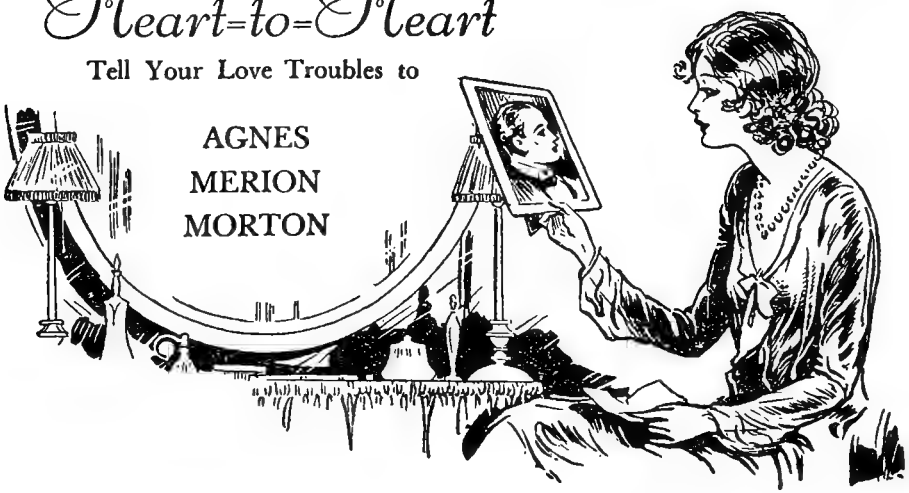
MORTON



MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters, she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to enclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

THE first letter this week takes exception to a bit of advice I recently gave a reader. I am printing it to show you that although, of course, I enjoy reading the letters which say nice things about the magazine and this department, I am also interested in those which are "contrary minded." So come on, objectors! Let's hear what you have to say.

Dear Agnes:

I'm very much interested, always, in your department, as you know, and usually agree with your advice. But how could you write as you did to "Betrayed"? How can you advise any woman to go on living with a man who has "betrayed" her so outrageously? How can she put up with the humiliation? I don't believe you would ever stand for it yourself, and I'm perfectly sure I wouldn't. Please don't be angry with me, but I just can't let that letter pass.

Your friend,
Nurse Dorothy.

Of course I am not angry, and am always glad to have you express your opinion for or against anything that appears here. Perhaps the advice would not have been the same to another type of woman—one nervous or high-strung, or one who took a different attitude toward her husband's wrong-

doing. But "Betrayed" showed herself so level headed, so fair, so lenient in her judgment, and, above all, so fond of her husband, that it seemed to me she would only make herself more unhappy and accomplish nothing by breaking up her home and depriving her boys of their father. If other readers want to discuss the matter, siding either with Nurse Dorothy or with me, I shall be glad to print what they have to say.

Al Higgins's letter raised a storm of protest, as I expected. Here are a few of the echoes of that storm:

Mr. Higgins:

You have a nerve to ask Mrs. Morton to find you a wife. What do you think she has against women that she should wish you for a husband on anybody? Unless you change your views, and mighty soon, too, I can assure you that you'll never stay married, even if you try it eighty-eight times. Times have changed some. Women are no longer subservient to their lords and masters. They don't have to be, nowadays.

Please, Higgins, for the sake of your future wives,

STAY SINGLE!

I'm Notta Dodo.

My dear Mrs. Morton:

Just read Mr. Higgins's letter and simply cannot resist commenting on it. First I should like to say how very much I enjoy your column, dear Mrs. Morton, and the whole of ALL-STORY.

Don't you think Mr. Higgins's two former wives must be much happier since he has divorced them? His description of the young couple next door makes me envy the little wife and mother. I'm not married, and see no prospect as yet, as I'm only seventeen years old, but when I marry it will be a man who thinks of me first and then himself. Don't men know that by thinking of us first they only invite us to think of them? We do, every single time. Now watch!

I wish Mr. Higgins had a four-months-old baby, a whole house, and three meals a day to fix for just one month, and see if it wouldn't change him just a little bit. I'll wager he would be glad to go back to office or factory work any time. My mother had five children, and there isn't one among us that does not worship her. She is fifty, and we hope to have her a long while yet, so we do all we can for her.

I hope no girl is foolish enough to trust her life in Mr. Higgins's hands until he has reformed. Long and prosperous be ALL-STORY'S *life!*

Blue Eyes and Happy.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I have just finished reading Al Higgins's letter, and I pity him. I don't wonder at his wife for running away from a man like him. Mr. Higgins, you must remember we are not living in the days of the Bible, and also the word obey is no longer in the marriage vows. You will never be able to keep a wife if that is the way you are going to treat her. You don't want a wife—you want a slave. It is nothing but right for the man to take care of his wife when she is sick, and as for her only purpose in the world being to raise children—Higgins, where do you get that stuff? I would just love to talk to you about thirty minutes. You would be a changed man when I got through with you.

I, too, have been married twice, and would be a widow again to-day if I

had got another one like you. But there are just a few men in this old world who think women were not made to slave for them. We both work out, and we both do the housework—he the cooking and I the cleaning. He wouldn't think of coming in and letting me fix a meal alone. We are what you call real pals.

I don't believe in quitting and going back, for it is always worse the second time than the first. At nineteen I married a man thirty-nine, and lived with him four years, and had a lovely boy who now is eight years old. He never cared for either of us, and seemed to think my place was at home always, and he must get out and have a good time, and his meals must be ready when he got in regardless of the time. And he was always grouching about everything—you couldn't please him. So four years was all I could stand of that, so I left. But I have a prince of a husband now, and I know how to appreciate him.

Texas.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

Pardon my pencil and also my paper, but I have just this minute read the letter by Al Higgins, and I just "nacherly" went up in the air. I think there must be something wrong with him. His wheels in the head must be loose or something. What is a woman made for, to be a slave? Nixy! We have just as much right to live as the "lord and master." Nowadays there is no such stuff as what he is trying to preach. He ought to get a woman who will kneel to him every time he says "kneel."

I am sorry for Al Higgins, and I say "God bless the other man." He knows what to appreciate. And as for waiting on his wife, it doesn't hurt him, and makes her happy. If you had done the same, Higgins, by yours, maybe you'd have been better off. It's you that makes a fool of yourself, not the other man. Do you ever think you'll find the kind of girl you want, Al Higgins? Pity upon her if you do!

The only purpose she was put on earth for—bah! If I could only write the words that come to my mind. If I did they'd have me arrested. I thank my lucky stars I'm not your wife. Or maybe you can thank your lucky stars I'm not. Because, believe me, I'd not give you cause for a divorce, nor would I be a slave to you or any man! A man like you doesn't know how to treat a woman—doesn't have any more respect for one than he would have for a hog or a cow. I say, shame upon you. You have no right to look at women, let alone marrying one.

I guess I've said my say. I do not care if you don't print it, Mrs. Morton, if you think I'm too rough on him. But I just "nacherly" had to get it off my chest.

Al Higgins's Enemy.

There are more, but we must lay them aside for the present or there will be no room for our questions and answers.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I want to tell my trouble to somebody, although there's nothing much any one could say that would help me. I am twenty-five—quite old, you see—and for more than three years I have been going with a wonderful man who has a wonderful position in the factory where I work. I gave up all my friends to go with him, but I did not mind that for he is so much more interesting than the rest, and means so much more to me.

Now, Mrs. Morton, when he came here the story was circulated that he was divorced, and shortly after we began going together he told me he "had been married before, and it costs him one hundred and fifty dollars a month to be single, and he's allowed to see his son (they had just one) once a month." He always goes away one week-end in the month, and the other Sundays he spends with me. He always talked about our getting married, even to my mother and father, and has encouraged me to make things for our home. But after all these years I have learned that he is not really divorced, only has a legal separation, and so is not free to marry any one.

I don't know what to do. When I think it over I realize he never really lied to me—he never said he was divorced. I love him so I can't give him up, and yet where are we getting like this? I am too old to find another man, anyway, and could never love or trust another even if any one wanted me. What can I do?

Heartbroken Lenore.

Lenore, this man has been very unfair to you. Even if he did not lie in so many words, he let you understand that he was free, and has gone on deceiving you all this time. That is just as bad as downright lies—if not worse. It does not argue very well for his trustworthiness as a husband.

First of all, I think you should face him with your knowledge that he is not divorced. Ask him right out why he let you believe that he was. By his answer you can determine your future course. He has weakly let things slide from day to day and from year to year, as people do, trusting that something will happen to make things come out right some day. That is the best that can be said for him. The worst is that he may have been deceiving you about his intentions of marrying again at all.

Unless he can make some definite promise now, the only thing you can do is, part from him and determine to build your life anew without him. That means, first, changing your position to one where you will not see him every day; and, second, resisting all his efforts to go on on the same terms.

You think you are old, but you are not. Twenty-five is youth, Lenore. If you were thirty-five or forty-five things would be much more hopeless. (Although probably when you get to be thirty-five you won't feel as old as you do now.) Yes, twenty-five is youth — and anything is possible to youth. Get hold of that thought with all your heart and mind, and go ahead as if you'd never met him. Get another job and throw yourself into it; learn all you can about the business; make up your mind to advance; call on all the will and strength you have to help you to forget.

It will be hard at first, almost impossibly hard, but not quite impossible. And every day it will grow a little easier until in time you will not even regret that you have lived through this experience. For everything that happens to us should broaden our outlook and teach us, if we take it the right way, not bitterness nor distrust of people, but sympathy for the hearts that suffer everywhere. You will be more worthy of love in the end just because you have had a disappointment like this, providing always that you look at it in the right way.

As for being too old to find another man—child, that's nonsense! Many women do not even meet their future husbands until they are older than you,

and one of the happiest wives and mothers I know was not married until she was thirty-six! I advise you to work hard and play hard—go out all you can, with both boys and girls—try to be interested in others—and gradually you will fill up the gap which parting from this man will leave in your life.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

Don't you think girls are a lot harder to raise than boys? I have a daughter sixteen years old, and she's a little —well, I'd hate to hear any one else say it, but I guess you'd call her boy-crazy. She's large and mature for her age, and the boys like her. We've always allowed her to go out to dances and so on, and I never minded when there were two or three young fellows friendly with her, but this summer she began to go steadily with one. He's a college boy, past twenty, in his third year now at Yale. I'd hoped his going back to his studies would put an end to their nonsense, but he's home every week or so, and they correspond constantly, and he even calls her up frequently on long distance. Already she has begun to talk of going to Prom. Do you think I should allow it? Do you think he can be honorably interested in so young a girl? What can I do to stop this friendship without making her hate me?

A Worried Mother.

My friend, you are acquainted with the young man and I am not, but in the general run of things I know of no reason why he shouldn't be honorably and innocently interested in your girl. If she is bright and attractive, why not?

I'd say, recognize the friendship, invite the boy (with others) to your home during his holidays, treat the whole affair as a normal circumstance, and refuse to get excited over it. Remember that these unimportant young emotions thrive on opposition—they will probably die a natural death if well-meaning older persons do not interfere. It is unlikely that this affair will ever come to anything but a pleasant friendship since they are both so young, and the boy will have his way to make after he gets through college.

As for Prom, I think I'd let her go if he asks her. She must *seem* old enough, at least, or he would not invite her; it is a great experience for a young girl, something to look back on on with pleasure all her life; and the guests at a man's college are always properly looked after and adequately chaperoned.

You are fortunate to have your daughter's confidence. Try to keep it, but at the same time teach her that there is something more in life than having a good time with the boys. Adopting stern measures might, indeed, not make her "hate you," and might very well teach her to be deceitful. Yes, it is harder to raise girls than boys, but it can be done.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I've never seen a letter from a man or boy in your department, but maybe that's because we don't write such good letters. I sure need some level-headed advice and hope you'll have time and room for me.

I'm nineteen, but am always taken for older because I'm mature-looking, and have been working for almost four years now. Last year I was laid up in a hospital for about two months after an automobile accident, and the nurse I had—well, she was an angel. I fell dead in love with her, and she with me,

and we became engaged. Now she is twenty-seven or eight, I'm not sure which, and she has been married before and divorced. That is not generally known, but she insisted on telling my parents, and they are horrified —old-fashioned, you see. They also object because she is older. Also because she is inclined to be flirtatious and fond of admiration. That does not bother me. I like to see other men admire her, so long as I know she belongs to me. She does not want to get married for two or three years. She says she "married in haste and repented at leisure" last time, and wants us both to be sure this time. I am sure, but of course when a fellow's people are always at him it makes it hard.

What do you say, Mrs. Morton?

Ed Stock.

Dear Mr. Stock, because you are both intelligent and sensible I am going to be very frank and tell you that I would have advised you not to become engaged if you had written me before doing so. But since you are already engaged, naturally I hesitate to say, "Break it off at once."

Let us take your letter point by point. She is older than you. Well, almost every man loves a woman older than himself first, and it depends on her whether this love shall be something he looks back upon tenderly all his life, or with shame and regret. Only in the rarest instances does a marriage contracted when the man is as young as you are—or resulting from an engagement contracted then — succeed. Of course, I know that this love seems very big and real now, but it is not a full-grown man's affection, now is it?

She is a divorcée. I am not old-fashioned enough to condemn her for that. Many a good woman has had to seek freedom through the divorce court, and if the reasons satisfy you, I would not let that fact bother me at all. But it does mean this: she is older, not only in years, but in experience and knowledge of the world. She has been through bitterness and disillusion. Have you enough sympathy and human understanding, have you been through enough suffering yourself to fill the place of the man that such a woman needs? You see, dear boy, there is one kind of wisdom that comes only with years, and you are only starting on the road of life at nineteen.

As for her love of admiration and "flirtatiousness," so long as you do not seem to be of a jealous nature (lucky fellow!) they are very harmless qualities. Especially since she appears to have plenty of good sense to offset them.

I am glad that you have no intention of marrying immediately, anyway, and I am sure that if your love should stand well this test of waiting—if in the end you come together wholeheartedly and joyously—it certainly will have proved itself to be the real thing.

But—there are a good many "ifs" in this letter, aren't there? Personally I hope that this engagement will die a natural death. And you can help it to do that: by not being overardent, by forming friendships with other nice girls, by getting some sort of hobby to take up your mind, and especially by allowing the nurse to indulge her liking for the company of other men. You met under romantic circumstances, and your people's well-meant interference works in exactly the opposite way to what they hope. I believe that at the bottom of your heart you agree with them and me. I think that, if you get out of the habit of thinking that this first love is going to turn out anything

except a very beautiful and helpful friendship, if gradually and diplomatically you allow a barrier to grow up between you, the release will come from your fiancée, as it should. Good luck to you both, whatever happens!

Marian, Michigan: I cannot answer your letter through the public press. Do you not trust me enough to send me your address? You need only write it on a stamped envelope and send it to me, and I will return it to you with my advice inclosed, and make no note of it to keep in the office files. Anything sent to this department is in absolute confidence, unless the writer wishes it to be published.

Mrs. Wilson, Nebraska: I like your sane, hopeful attitude toward things; it augurs well for your future. You ask me if I think you can make a success as an actress. Ordinarily, I should have to answer: "Never having seen your work, I cannot tell." But in your case I do know this, that any one possessed of your uncommon good sense, ambition, and determination, plus experience, just simply can't escape success in our country. For I have yet to see a combination like that minus real talent. You don't waste time talking about lack of opportunity; you make your own opportunities. The only missing link in your equipment is self-confidence. So begin believing in yourself just as hard as you can; believe in yourself unshakably.

Now let us turn to your husband's problem. You tell me that he gives up at each disappointment, and right there you have given me the keynote of his failure. He may be clever, but that isn't enough; he must be persevering, too. Genius itself can't get along in this world without grit. Every time that your husband gives up he confesses, "I am beaten," and the oftener he does that, the farther he drops from ultimate success, the easier he makes it to fail next time. Now, you do this for him: plant the success idea in his mind. Don't let him admit failure even to you. Don't talk failure; talk success until you have clinched it, both of you. I haven't any doubt of your personal success, and through you the tide may turn for him.

Periwinkle, Alabama: I think you and your young man have every chance in the world of becoming an outstandingly happy married couple. You are both darlings, and I wish I could reproduce your pictures here and ask the readers if they don't agree!

TRAGIC.—It *is* hard, but you must not take the short road out. That never helped any one yet. Face about, take up the burden with a smile and you will find it drop from you before you know it.

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you,
Weep, and you weep alone."

Remember the Spartan boy and do your bit to help in this war of pain and sorrow.

MERRY LOU.—You are the right sort. I can see that nothing will daunt your spirit. The good fairy made you a gift at your birth, and with that and your cheerful disposition you will win.

MISUNDERSTOOD, there are millions like you. Learn to understand yourself before you expect others to understand you. Be sure of your motives and acts and you will find others reflecting your own confidence in yourself. And always—always be sure to mind your own business.

Choosing a Career

Conducted by
ELIZABETH WRIGHT

HAVE you found your ideal job? Are you satisfied with your present salary? If not, let Miss Wright advise you.

In these pages many new and attractive professions for girls are discussed. If one of these appeals to you, and you wish to learn more about it, address your letter to Elizabeth Wright, care "Choosing a Career" Department, All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York. A stamped, addressed envelope will bring you an answer by mail.

THE girl who is going to open a dress shop of her own must begin by deciding upon location. In New York the rents are high, and the girl might start by making the front parlor of her own apartment into a showroom—if the apartment is on the street floor. A little window display can be easily arranged.

Get the consent of the landlord to place a small sign in the window. This is as a guide to those seeking the shop as well as to call in street trade.

The second step is the very easy one of establishing credit. Go to the wholesale houses in the garment center of the town nearest you—in New York there is an established center for the garment industry—and have a personal talk with the manufacturers. Take along your references. Give a bank reference, if you can.

If possible pay cash. A cash customer gets better prices, closer attention and the choicest pick. Do not confine yourself to any one dealer. Establish your credit with half a dozen, choosing those that specialize, variously, in evening gowns, in street modes, house dresses, and frocks for everyday business wear.

To begin you will require not less than fifty gowns. This may seem an unnecessary number — but remember this! Everything depends upon first impressions, and your first customers will expect a fine choice of dresses. If you can show them only two or three they will go away, never to return. There is an old axiom which says that a dissatisfied customer is worse than a dead one, because she can go about telling people that your shop is no good.

If you are using your own parlor you can put in wardrobes without disfiguring the room. Let them have glass fronts so that the customer can view herself and her gowns. Glass has a very flattering effect upon a room. It makes it seem larger, and it sheds a luster upon fabrics.

Paint the woodwork and the walls a light cream. Gowns show off better against a light background. Moreover there is an economic argument in favor of white, cream, yellow or pale blue. It takes less electricity to light the room. One or two electric bulbs, disposed on each of the four sides, will make the room pleasantly bright. Do not use top lighting. Nothing is more unbecoming. And choose slightly tinted shades for the lights. Perhaps pale gold.

Procure substantial paper boxes and have them as artistic as you can. Customers have been known to buy a gown just to get the box.

Keep open evenings. Business girls must be smartly attired, yet how can they manage when shops are closed at night? Try to get this trade. They have money to spend and they are invariably prompt and conscientious. No one ever knew a business woman to take a frock home, wear it a few times and return it as "unsatisfactory."

The wise girl, just starting out, will open her shop at seven in the morning for a chance early morning sale, and will keep open until nearly midnight. In the morning she can go out and do her own buying, and in the middle of the afternoon—during the slack hours—she can take her rest.

The young shopkeeper must have an assistant. This may be a young girl who gives up a few hours merely to make pin money. But she must be very neat, very watchful and industrious. Her job is to keep the gowns on the hangers, help customers on and off with dresses, and do up packages.

But when all has been said about the mechanics of the dress shop, there still remains a great deal to be done. The

This Week's Hint For Earning More Money

In every community, large or small, a very fair living awaits the girl who is willing to take pets to board.

It is the age of travel and yet many a woman has had to stay at home on account of her pets.

A dog, cat, or canary, when put out to board, must have a supply of its accustomed food; it must have quiet and it should be able to creep into dark corners to hide until the first shyness wears off. For this reason a private home offers advantages.

Fancy prices are charged for boarding petted animals. An Angora cat must be brushed, entertained with catnip, mice and playthings—all its usual luxuries—and for taking care of such an animal the keeper of any Pets' Boarding House asks five dollars a week. A dog's board varies according to size from three to ten dollars a week, or more in the case of a Great Dane.

Canaries must be protected from drafts and supplied with green food and their cages kept clean. This means a cost of two dollars a week if the seed is supplied. Parrots cost four dollars a week. The prices vary according to the community.

But for the animal lover it is the most delightful of all work; and it is certainly an occupation that pays. The pets are not fussy about delicate china and fine linen. All they ask is warmth, light, food and a soft place to sleep and—if they can get it—a little love and a gentle pat on the head thrown in.

girl who merely goes to the wholesaler and purchases gowns and brings them home to sell at retail will fail—if she does nothing more.

She must impart to her gown that touch which lifts it out of its class and makes it a true creation. This is done only by hand work. It is the touch which makes the smart gown smarter.

Every season sees something new in this line, something which brings the gown right up to date. It may be a flower embroidered upon the hip, eyelet work upon the waist, a line of embroidery marking the rim of the collar and cuff line or a flower made from the dress material. Whatever it may be it should be added by the woman whose gown shop is to be distinctive.

For this purpose a machine that will hemstitch is important. This machine also does picot work and other form of trimming. Often it takes only a shawl collar with border hemstitched, or a scarf with picot finished ends, to complete a dress otherwise not different from a thousand others. These touches of hand work are so important that no girl should attempt a dress shop unless she is prepared to add them to her dresses.

In cheap ready-mades the ornaments are necessarily common. If a button or a buckle or a pin of smart design can be substituted for the one that is on the gown the whole appearance is changed. A string of beads will dignify a gown if chosen well and matched to the large chiffon handkerchief tucked in the pocket.

People are hesitant about buying of a girl who looks ill-dressed. Your gown, preferably, should be black, or of some dark color. You are handling blues, violets, crimsons, browns in all the new shades, and your own dress must harmonize with the gown in hand.

Do not run accounts. If necessary incorporate your little shop, and announce to customers asking credit that you are not permitted to open books. Business girls pay when they purchase, and are the best of all customers. They buy often and pay willingly.

Be sure to have a couple of trying-on nooks, no matter how small, and a place where customers can wait until you are at leisure.

These are essential rules. By following them and adding new rules of your own, the result of your practical experience in your own neighborhood, you will gradually get into a field where there is business all the year around, and a steady income.

Get an Original Illustration Free

On page 160 you will find a coupon; fill this out and return it to us together with nine other coupons also clipped from ALL-STORY and we will send you the original drawing of any illustration in this or previous issues of the magazine. Perhaps you have already chosen one illustration as the best you have seen—you may have the artist's drawing free if you will mail us ten coupons.

In Confidence

Practical First Aid to Everyday Living

Conducted by

DOROTHEA DALE

ANY question about the little problems that confront you daily in your business or social life Mrs. Dale will be glad to answer. No question is too small. Write her about anything that is perplexing you—how to word a letter, how to travel, what present to give, what to say and when, table etiquette, et cetera.

If an emergency arises and you need immediate advice your letter will be answered by return mail, if you will inclose a return envelope stamped and addressed.

All letters will be held in strict confidence.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

There is a fellow—let's call him X—who always cuts in on my dances. Now, I don't like him personally, and he's not a good dancer. I always refuse to dance with him when he asks me, but, of course, I have to go with him when he cuts in. I have told him over and over that I wish he would stop, but he only laughs and says I'll be his steady yet, and silly things like that. Don't you think his conduct is inexcusable, Mrs. Dale, and what can I do to make him stop? He spoils every dance I go to.

Mabelle.

Yes, I do think that his conduct is inexcusable, and also that it gives you a reason for doing something which is really against the rules. When you are dancing with a partner you know pretty well, explain to him and ask him to cut back on X, if he cuts in, after you have been once around the floor with him. Then tell X just once more, very definitely, that you will not dance with him again, that you will refuse to let your partner relinquish you again, even in the middle of the dance or ballroom. A public rebuff is a cruel thing to administer, but he richly deserves it, and it is, apparently, the only subtlety that will reach him.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

I am a widow, about to remarry. Must I wear a traveling costume at the wedding?

Mrs. Travers.

We had a question along these lines in this department not long ago. The answer is, No. I recently attended a

wedding where the bride, a young widow, wore a gorgeous creation of cloth of gold with a brocade hat. Such a costume is not practical for people in moderate circumstances, however, and if you do not care for it you are at liberty to wear anything you like except white satin and a veil. Work out a scheme in your favorite and most becoming colors, in silk or crape.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

I am invited to a house party in the country for Christmas week. Will you please tell me what clothes I should take along? I haven't a fur coat—would you refuse to go on that account?

A. M. H.

Fur coats are convenient, of course, but since they have become so common many of the smartest women wear cloth coats with fur collars on any occasion. So, if you have a nice one you can hold up your head with anybody.

Take along a good, serviceable outfit for outdoor wear, with an unspoilable hat, heavy gloves, a neatly fitting pair of arctics, and two or three pairs of woolen or silk-and-wool stockings. You should have another chic hat, two or three smart, simple frocks for morning wear, and at least two "dress-up" gowns for dinner and the evening. You will know, from the social character of the friends who invite you, whether these should be formal evening dresses or merely pretty afternoon costumes. You should have one pair of "common-sense" shoes and two pairs of pretty slippers. Plenty of changes of "undies," and a good-looking bathrobe complete the wardrobe.

Since you live in New York you probably know where to obtain anything you lack reasonably, even at this time of year. "Fifth Avenue Fashions at Third Avenue Prices." If not, drop me another line and I will let you have the addresses you need.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

Must an engagement ring be returned when the engagement is broken? Should the breaking of the engagement be announced in the newspapers?

Eileen.

The engagement ring and any other valuable presents made by the young man to his fiancée must be returned, certainly; and both he and she should return each other's photographs unless the parting is very amicable indeed. Letters need not be sent back, only burned. The breaking of an engagement should not be announced in the newspapers except when there is absolutely no time before the wedding date to announce the change in any other way. It is always deplorable to give such an event any more publicity than is positively unavoidable. Write letters, or ask your mother to write letters to your more intimate friends, saying that "the engagement no longer exists," or "the marriage will not take place." If wedding presents have begun to arrive they must be returned, with notes of appreciation.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

Will you please tell me if it is vulgar to use sealing wax on letters? I love it, and have such a pretty seal ring to stamp them with, but I've noticed it isn't done very much, so wonder if it's good form. Also, what do you think of perfume.

Rose R.

Sealing wax is perfectly good form. You can, indeed, make your letters

very individual in appearance by always sealing them with the same color wax, and stamping them neatly with the same seal. The practice of using sealing wax is more common in Europe, particularly England, than it is here. Many royal and noble families invariably use it, stamping it with their coat of arms or a tiny crown. People in the United States do not seal their letters in this fashion so often principally because it is a little more trouble and takes a little more time.

As for perfume, there is nothing more alluring, more feminine, than a faint, elusive scent. Do not the very daintiest heroines in romantic love stories always use the same delicate fragrance? A strong odor which obtrudes itself upon the notice at several yards distance, is something else again.

Do not use perfume unless you can afford the more costly varieties. Expensive toilet water is better than cheap perfume any day.

Won't You Fill This Out and Mail It To Us?

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

Tag-Along Girl .....

The Clown's Sweetheart .....

Red Head .....

And the Pursuit of Happiness.....

Cupid's Touchdown .....

Deserted .....

Heartbreak House .....

Another's Need .....

Breath o' Love .....

Mad Marriage .....

My favorite authors are .....

Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)